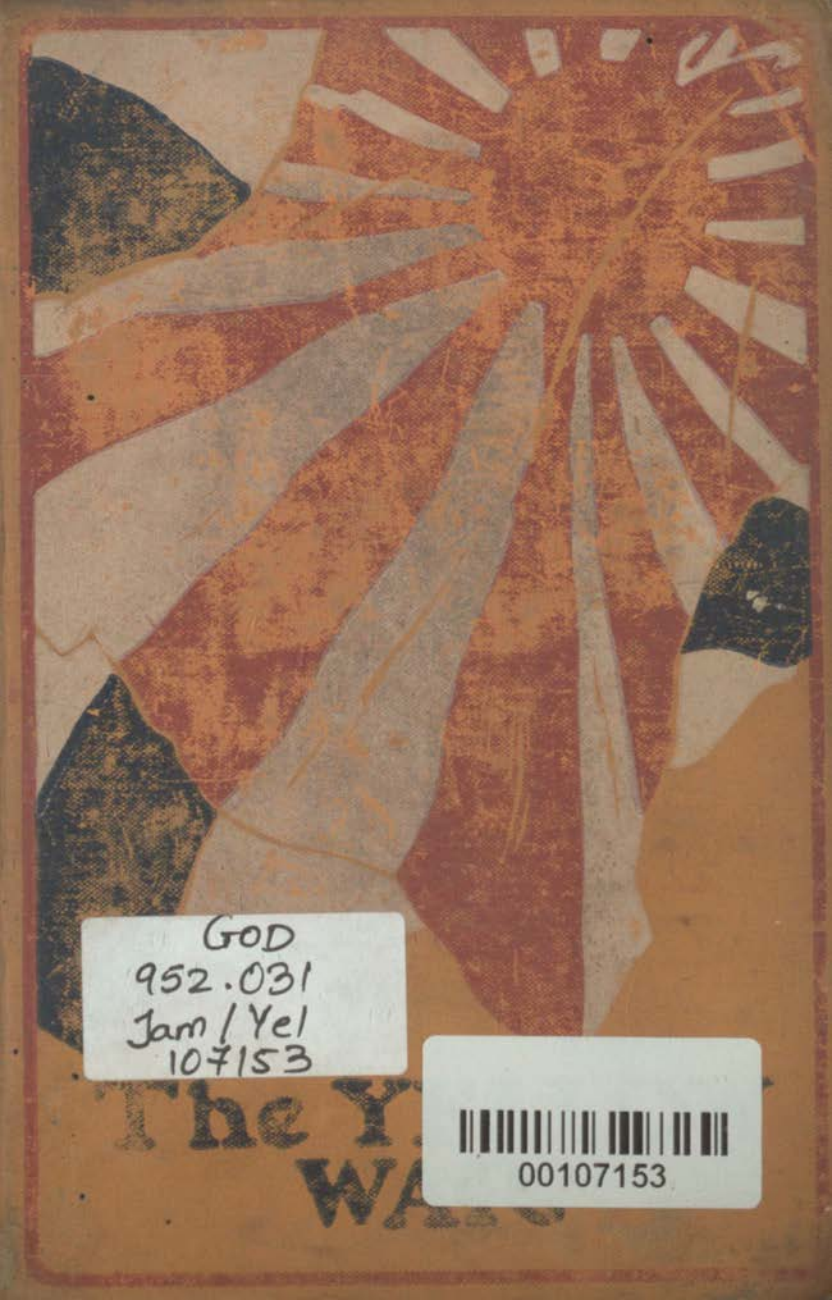
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The Yellow War

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"Black, hissing, and battered, the boat was closing on us like some hideous sea-monster."

The Yellow War

BY

"O"

("INTELLIGENCE OFFICER")

AUTHOR OF 'ON THE HEELS OF DE WET'

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THE *BAYAN*

SECOND IMPRESSION

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MCMV

1905

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FOREWORD.

THE following sketches have been published with the object of giving the layman some glimpses of the true significance of war when two first-class Powers come together on sea and land in the clash of battle. Of many of the incidents related I have been an eye-witness. For the rest, I have dealt at first hand with the actors themselves. Although for the purpose of concealing identity the nomenclature is fictitious, yet every character in the book represents some living actor in the terrific drama with which I have been intimate during the past year. Linguistic difficulties may have made some

of my translations a little free: for this I must apologise.

The majority of the sketches have already appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' to the proprietors of which I am much indebted.

The Illustrations have been reproduced by the courtesy of the proprietors of 'The Graphic.'

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THE YELLOW WAR.

I.

THE BLOCKING OF PORT ARTHUR.

CHINAMPO, *April* 1904.

THE officer in command of the doomed ship stood in front of the wheel with his eyes glued upon the deepening base of black darkness in front of him. The increasing shadow betokened the land he was striving to make. Ever and anon he seized the night-glass, peered into the thickness, and then replaced the glass on the rack. Once only did he raise his right hand in signal to the dim figure of the man at the wheel. All was darkness. The only light was the binnacle, and it was so cowled with canvas

that the figure at the wheel was bending over his work to keep his view of the compass. The slow grind of the half-speed engines and the swirl of displaced water was in itself sound enough to render almost unbearable the overpowering feeling of silence.

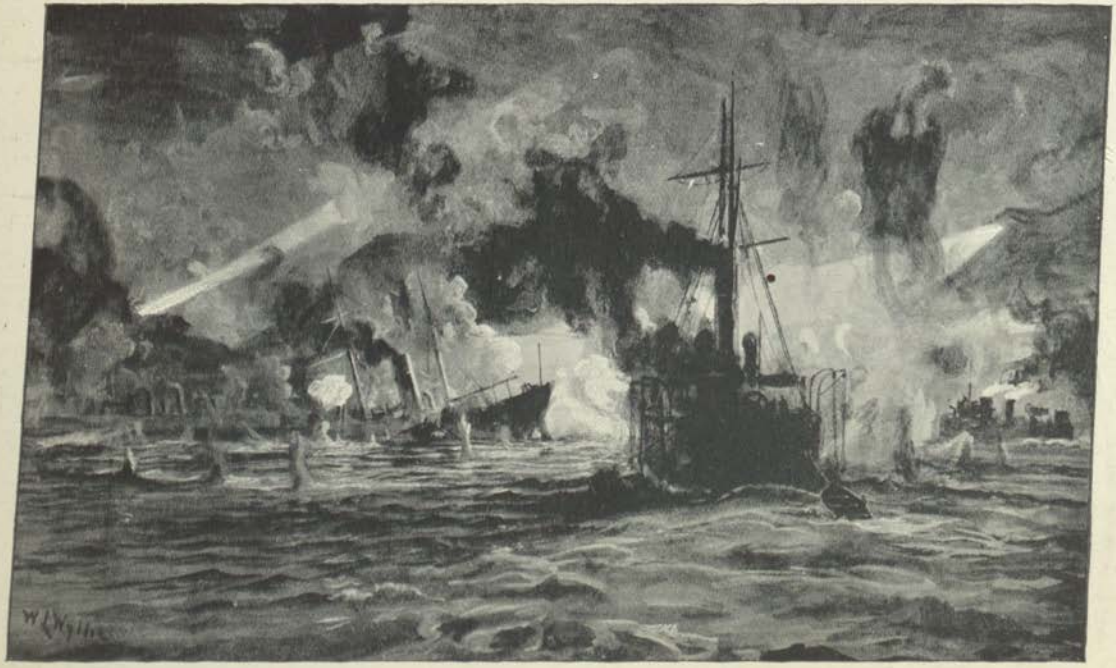
Suddenly a great flood of light cleft the darkness ahead. It was so white and clear that the faces of the three men on the bridge looked pale and death-like. The man at the wheel winced with the stroke —it was literally a stroke of light; but the officer only moved his hand. The enemy had defeated their own ends; they had shown him the passage—half a point to starboard and the course was true. There stood the white stones of the lighthouse which for weeks had surrendered its functions to port-bound mariners.

For the space of perhaps fifteen seconds the great white eye penetrating the darkness was fixed full upon the boat. It

winked irresolutely, flashed upwards, then down again, away to starboard, until the elliptical base of the fearsome cone of light was well abeam. Then back it came and glared savagely full upon the steamer, silently closing down upon it. It looked long and steadfastly, and, as suddenly as it had come, it was cut off. All was dark and dreadful again. But only for a second. A long meteor-like rocket shot up from the centre of the great overpowering mass ahead. Its sinuous course closed in a mass of sparks. It was as if the torch had been applied to the *pièce de résistance* of some great firework display. In a moment what was darkness became a semicircle of scintillating light. The great beam of the Golden Hill searchlight leapt into life. It was supported by a score of lesser search-lights from the foremasts of the ships in harbour. But there were other lights—lightning flashes from the breast of the mountain, which at intervals the acute

beams of the searchlights revealed—flashes which seared the gloom and vanished. Within a moment's space after this blaze of light came the ominous rattle which discovered its origin. The forts of Port Arthur were firing the guns which at night are always trained upon the harbour approaches. The tumult was deafening. The great bare flanks of the mountains behind caught up the deadly roll of discharging quick-firers, and flung the sound back in mocking reverberation. But that was not the worst sound. The hissing rush of projectiles, the ear-splitting swish as they struck the water and exploded, or shrieked in ricochet overhead — in a moment the tension bred of apprehensive darkness had changed to an inferno of modern war.

The man at the wheel bent his head forward with the impulse of a man meeting a storm. But the officer never moved aught but his directing hand. The ever appearing and disappearing arc of the



"The forts of Port Arthur were firing the guns which at night are always trained upon the harbour approaches."

searchlights gave him his point, and he steered directly upon it, while the four men crouching at the lifeboat falls, and sweating engine-room volunteers, wondered when the whistle would sound to call them on deck from the chance of the most awful death to which mariners live exposed—death from the escape of disabled boilers!

For a moment from amidst the circle of flashes, low down on the port-bow of the doomed ship, a smaller searchlight showed. It seemed to break up from the very water-level. It was the flashlight of a destroyer. At last the Japanese officer gave evidence of sensibility to the Hades which surrounded him. He had brought his ship far enough into the passage. The beam in front told him that the enemy would do the rest. He blew the whistle which his teeth had almost bitten flat. In a second the men manned the falls of the lifeboat, while the petty officer responsible for the igniting of the bursting charge in the

vessel's hold dropped down the hatchway to the point where his duty lay.

"Port, hard a-port!" the officer was now fairly gesticulating. As her head came slowly round a heavy shell hit her forward. So great was the impact of this metal stroke that for a moment it nullified the efforts of the helm, and flung the officer and man at the wheel from their feet, while the men at the falls became a woeful heap in the scuppers. Then another shock. This was different. It was as if an earthquake had struck her: as if some great monster of the deep had seized her in its tentacles and shaken her. Instantaneously the engines stopped. If the officer could have seen them, he would have found that they were twisted out of all semblance of symmetry. A torpedo had struck her amidships, and had brought her mechanical movement to a standstill. She would not even answer her helm. And in spite of the inferno below, an unending hell of pro-

jectiles tore the darkness above. Again the whistle sounded—three times in long shrill notes. It was the order to take to the boat. As the men slipped down the ropes the base of the after-mast and smoke-stack were swept out of her by shell-fire. In the boat the officer stood up and counted his men. There should have been fifteen. One was missing. "It is the petty officer in the hold!" the word was passed along. In a moment the officer had swung himself up to the deck again; and as the boat's crew waited, the man with the boat-hook could feel the inches sinking, as the ship settled. Then a three-inch shell took the boat-hook out of his hand, and, to save her from drifting, he had to jump up and hold on to the slack fall. Again the light of the destroyer was on them, and the quick-firing projectiles clanged and hissed against the vessel's iron sides with the tumult and continuity of hammers in iron-foundry works.

The officer was at the rail again.

Had the petty officer returned? No! The officer disappeared back to the hold. A giant hissing from the engine-room told him that the water would soon reach the boilers. It was hopeless. The petty officer must have been killed by the concussion of the Russian torpedo. The officer was on deck again. The ship was listing heavily. He shouted to his men in the boat, now hanging on in momentary terror of being engulfed in the wash of the sinking ship. His foot was on the rail, when the destroyer reopened with its quick-firer. A shell took him in the neck and shoulder, and, bursting on impact, carried this brave man's head and brains away with it. His mutilated trunk fell forward amongst his anxious men struggling to keep the boat on. For a moment they did not know that he was dead. He was aboard. They pushed off, and as they handled the oars gave a cheer. Then they discovered that it was the warm

thick life's-blood of their chief and not the spume of the sea which had made them so wet in the darkness. They were three lengths away when the water reached the boilers. A rush of steam, a report that dwarfed the raging gun-fire, and the *Fukui Maru* rolled over and settled just in the place which her officer, Commander Hirose of the imperial Japanese navy, had chosen. And three other tragedies similar to this were taking place in the narrow channel of Port Arthur's harbour entrance this very night.

II.

A GLIMPSE AT THE "BAYAN."

April 1904.

THE rear-admiral and his flag-captain had been on the bridge the whole night. It was miserable weather: the wind had veered round towards the north, and in spite of the promise of spring which the last fortnight had given, the sleet from the squalls was as icy as that of a mid-winter blizzard.

Every quarter of an hour the navigating lieutenant made his way to the bridge to apprise the admiral of the position of the squadron. Half an hour ago the first signs of approaching dawn had cut into the gloom in the east, but the squalls had rolled up again and practically nullified the first efforts of awakening day, — so much so

that it was impossible to make out even the outline of the vessel following the flag-ship, although it was only two cable-lengths astern. For one moment the navigating lieutenant turned on the little reading-lamp on the bridge, which gave sufficient shrouded light to enable the admiral to follow the markings on the chart. The admiral glanced at the pencil-marks, then looked at the clock. He nodded his head, with the single remark, "We are in the right place"; in a moment the little light was extinguished, and all was darkness.

The three men peered anxiously into the murky mist-cloud on the port-beam,—the haze of the driving rain-storm was still very thick. Something seemed to catch the navigating lieutenant's ear, for he left the senior officers and made his way to the starboard rail; for two minutes he remained motionless, the pose of his body indicating rapt attention. He seemed satisfied, for on moving back to the others he whispered

something in the admiral's ear, and all three officers went over to the rail. There was no doubt about it now. The wind which had brought the squall dropped as suddenly as it had risen, and the low muffled murmur which heralds firing at sea could be distinctly heard above the wash that the vessel made, as she drove her way through the water.

The squall had passed, and almost immediately the increased vigour of returning day forced itself superior to the shadows of vanishing night. What had been black now became the dull grey of a humid mid-ocean morning. The great mysterious shadows of the ships astern picked themselves out from the surrounding mists, while even the low hulls of the wicked-looking little torpedo craft, on either flank, began to show as indistinct masses against the false horizon. As day dawned the sound of firing seemed to increase. Now it was quite distinct—a rattle of quick-firers burning ammunition

in deadly earnest. The torpedo craft had heard it too, for suddenly the three indistinct blotches which betokened the vessels on the starboard beam put up their helms and disappeared into the mist. It was too thick yet to make a flag-signal, so the admiral stood on his course.

As one looked down from the bridge it seemed that the flag-ship was some ghostly death-ship. Everything was lean and gaunt and silent; there was no movement, save where the rain-wash trickled over into the scuppers; few men could be seen, and of these each stood motionless to his quarters.

It was a depressing sight. There is probably nothing in this world so oppressive as the appearance of the modern warship fined down to the actual requisites of slaughter as she appears from the bridge on a cold grey morning, with officers and crew strained by waiting for that moment in which the vessel shall commence to put in practice the desperate object of her

existence. If this strain were to be continuous it would be more than the most magnificent nerves in human nature could support. Such is the state at dawn, but daybreak generally brings relief. So it is in this case.

The torpedo-boats had hardly been absent five minutes before they were back again, and the leading boat steamed in close alongside the flag-ship. Six, eight, five little flags fluttered out from its apology for a mast. The navigating lieutenant had gone below, but the signalman read them in spite of the mist; the admiral looked at his flag-captain and they both smiled. The expression of the smile was that of a man who had played for a high stake and won. The admiral said three words, and the flag-captain passed them on to the signalman,—up fluttered the answering pennant, and a second later the message was hoisted beneath it. Other little pennants appeared on each of the dumpy masts of the torpedo

craft, and they disappeared full steam ahead.

It was now quite light, and the mist very rapidly cleared, disclosing the squadron of cruisers, line ahead, forging forward at just sufficient speed to keep them upon their course. The senior officers of the flag-ship still stood grouped on the starboard rail. It was now broad daylight, and the wind changed suddenly to the west: as it changed it rolled up patches of the fog, so that almost in the time that it would have taken to cross the bridge a grey stretch of open sea was visible towards the north. The four officers on the bridge saw a heavy pall of smoke at the same moment,—that tell-tale smoke which is proof of cheap coal in the stoke-hole. The wind cleared it, as it had cleared the mist. The flag-lieutenant was the first to speak. "One, two, three, four," he said as he counted the smoke-stacks; "that is the *Bayan*."

The Russian made the squadron out at the same moment, for the black smudge of her hull against the horizon was pierced by the lurid yellow of burning cordite. There were a few seconds, during which the officers on the bridge stood erect from the stooping position which had been theirs when gazing into the haze,—then came a rushing, swishing sound, the terrifying screech of projectiles in passage through the air. Two hurtled overhead, while a third, falling short, exploded upon impact with the water, and sent a great salt spray driving across the bridge. The *Bayan* is a handy vessel; but all the skilful manœuvring in the world could not have saved her if she had persevered in action against six cruisers. But to get away there were just a few seconds when she had to show her broadside. She did it bravely, the yellow flashes sparkling up and down the whole length of her lean hull. The flag-captain was at the speaking-tube, and as the

Russian turned, quiver after quiver shook the bridge. The ear-splitting reports which followed showed how the flag-ship took advantage of the broader target. Not only the flag-ship, for the signalmen were busy at the halyards; and as the admiral glanced sternwards he saw behind him a flickering line of yellow flashes, proof positive that each of his captains had read his signal. As for the *Bayan*, it looked for all the world as if she were the centre of a shoal of spouting whales. Great geysers of water seemed to splash almost as high as her smoke-stacks, and from the burst of those projectiles which made their contact it would seem that the vessel was bound to be destroyed. But, as already remarked, she is a handy craft. Only a few seconds of this fearful ordeal, and then her four funnels seemed to disappear into one, and she was making the best of her 22-knots speed to Port Arthur. No ignoble flight, for her stern still gave evidence of her

sting, and in rapid succession three great projectiles ricochetted high over the flagship. For a moment the admiral had it in his mind to make the signal to pursue; but he remembered his orders, and the squadron stood steadily on at half-speed. The wind rolled up another squall, and the *Bayan* was lost to sight almost as rapidly as she had appeared.

III.

THE RACE FOR PINGYANG.

CHINAMPO, *April* 1904.

FOR the twentieth time that morning the column came to a halt. It was a repetition of the wearisome blocks which had delayed the troops since daybreak: the wind was too boisterous and the snow too heavy for any one to hear an order. The files behind simply took their cue from the files in front of them. As each particular four came to a standstill the men turned their backs to the teeth of the blizzard. Thus when his turn came Private Kawada turned with them. The men immediately placed their rifles between their knees and did their best to resuscitate the circulation in their hands. One or two of the files,

recking nothing of the state of the ground beneath them, and borne down by the weight of accoutrements and skin coats, heavy and saturated, dropped to their knees. Kawada took off his left mitten and put his fingers in his mouth in the hope that he might get back some little warmth into the extremities. How different it all was to what he had expected when he had first been mobilised in Tokyo! How different his sensations now to what they were when his corps had marched to the Shimbashi station! Then he had felt there was no hardship in fighting for one's country, it all seemed so easy and pleasant. He looked round at his three more intimate companions in hardship; their faces were the colour of the parchment of a drum discoloured by age and ill-usage. Some of them were literally green with cold, and the state of the ground they were crossing was such that the very clothes which were intended to protect them

seemed, in their weight and soddenness, their worst enemies. When they had debarked from the transport the men had landed singing. They had all sung patriotic songs as they marched into their first bivouac, but that was days ago, and at the present moment there seemed to be none left who had the heart or spirit to sing.

An officer passed down the line: he was riding a shoddy little pony which looked as if twenty-four hours must see the finish of its lease of life. This officer shouted to the right-hand files that there would be a halt of half an hour. As the men heard this they wrapped the flap of their coats tighter round the locks of their rifles and, just as they stood, flung themselves down in the sleet-slush. One of the more enterprising in the group, of which Kawada now found himself the centre, had carried, slung to the end of his rifle, a small perforated tobacco-tin containing an inch or two of

live charcoal. This primitive heater was passed from hand to hand, men even pressing it against their cheeks in the endeavour to persuade some artificial heat into their systems.

Kawada crouched down in the snow-morass, and if he had not been a true Japanese, imbued with the sense that whatever service done as a national duty was a light service, he would have wished —as so many thousands, comprising all known nationalities of the world, have wished before him — that he had never been a soldier. To keep dry or warm was out of the question, but by huddling close together some protection was afforded from the cutting wind and a little collective animal heat arrived at. And so tired, so weary, and so cold were the men that they even, in spite of their bitter situation, dozed off.

Kawada's thoughts turned to Tokyo: he thought of the pleasant garden in Aoyama

which, from all precedent, should by now have begun to give evidence of that spring life upon which is founded the whole artistic virtue of Japan. He thought of the last evening that he had spent in Shimbashi, of the well-lighted and warm rooms of the fashionable tea-house and the delicacies in fried eels and rice, of the bright eyes of the peerless Hoorji as she knelt in front of him; in fact, he thought of all the pleasures of the luxurious life he had left behind him. And in comparison what was his state now? Perished with cold, nauseated with the taste of the glutinous stale rice which he carried in the little wicker-basket attached to his belt; miserable and friendless save for his companions in misfortune around him, and, for all he knew, forgotten, but—and here the great heart of the Japanese people welled up in him—it was all being suffered, all being endured, in the service of Japan, in the service of the country which was

destined, perhaps even in Kawada's time, to be the greatest Power in Asia.

There was some movement ahead; the men in the preceding files were rising to their feet; Kawada's section followed suit, and in another three minutes the whole force was plodding wearily onward, squelching into the teeth of the northern blizzard. Thus they pushed on, miserable, weary, and footsore, the tiny little advance-guard of the great enterprise which Japan had undertaken to the astonishment of the world. Just 300 men, battling with the adverse elements, to reach Pingyang. In front of them they had the might of the great Russian Empire of the north. Just 300 men! what if the Russians should have been before them in this race for the all-important goal? What could 300 men expect to do if the great army of Cossacks should already have overrun Korea? The snow-clouds ahead obliterated all that was in front of them; in fact, at times it was

almost impossible for them to see the road by which they were travelling. But they knew what they had behind them: they were the advance-guard of the army which, if the necessity should arise, would consist of 500,000 men; of the nation which, before it would acknowledge defeat, would find 20 millions of men prepared to enter upon a more desperate enterprise even than that in which this little advance-guard was now engaged. If Pingyang were reached in time, what would past hardships matter? what would it signify that the road from Hai-ju to Pingyang was strewn with the bodies of the weaklings from the forlorn-hope?

. . . . . .

A week later all was forgotten. Kawada and his companions lay in the snow trenches north of Pingyang. They cooked their rice themselves, and were able, when not on duty, to sit round a bowl of smouldering charcoal and watch

behind them the great black line winding its way through the snowdrifts, which declared the head of Kuroki's army as it marched up to occupy the position which the advance-guard had seized. And as Kawada gazed out across the miles of white in front of him he ceased to speculate as to the chances of Hoorji having found another lover: his only thought for the moment was when the rifle, which he nursed so carefully under the flap of his fur-lined coat, would be called upon to do its duty. And that very morning, as he leaned upon the parapet, far away in the north he made out a few black specks standing out in bold relief against the snow. He called a sergeant, and together through glasses they examined the suspicious spots. They were coming up from under a rise. More and more appeared, until at least the total reached twenty, and as they came nearer the magnifying-glasses unmasked the tell-

tale lance-poles. These specks were the first messengers from the great Power of the north. They were the advance-guard of six sotnias of Cossacks detailed to seize and hold Pingyang.

In less than an hour Kawada's rifle burnt the first cartridge in the land struggle of the Russo-Japanese war.

IV.

RIVER-FIGHTING.

CHINAMPO, *April* 1904.

THE Korean fisherman did not like his job in the least. He cowered down beneath the gunwale chattering like a maniac, and with difficulty maintained his hold on the tiller and the sheet of the lateen sail. No one took any heed of his chattering, and save that the naval lieutenant threatened him occasionally with his scabbard he was left to his own devices. The junk's sails were well filled, and as the current was with her she was making a good eight knots as she threaded her way between the sand-dunes. Ever and anon the boat had to force its way through fields of drift-ice, for the Yalu had only just commenced

to disgorge its winter surface. But it was not the difficulties of navigation which had reduced the Korean fisherman to such a state of abject terror,—it was the fact that he had been impressed by the boat's crew of Japanese sailors from the scouting gun-boat to take them up to the mouth of the river. None knew better than he that seven miles of the course that he was now steering would take them right into the Russian lines. And his chattering at the moment was due to the uncertainty of thought whether it were better to be shot at once by the revolver hanging aggressively from the lieutenant's belt, or to have his lease of life deferred until they were at a range from which the Russian outposts would do the killing. But the little lieutenant recked nothing of this argument; he was busy disposing of his seven men at the thwarts, and at the same time scanning the skylines of the sand-dunes as they raced past.

Half a mile ahead a great bank jutted out across their course; on the far side of this he could make out a lateen sail similar to their own. As soon as the fisherman saw it his chattering redoubled, and in the anxiety of his desire to communicate to the lieutenant he let go the sheet. All Japanese objurgations are polite, and feeling that he had nothing in his vocabulary to meet the case, the little lieutenant rescued the sheet with his right hand and brought the boat up to the wind again himself, while with his left he belaboured the steersman.

They had to make a considerable detour before they could round the obstacle in front of them, but once they were clear they found that they were half a mile away from the junk, the sight of which had so agitated the Korean. As a rule, in these waters fishermen do not carry arms, and the first thing the lieutenant made out, when he got a clear sight of the strange craft, was the glint of the morning sun on

rifles. Had a Japanese boat's crew ever had such luck before? The little officer smiled all over his face as he communicated the joyful tidings to his men—here indeed was a situation; a primitive sea fight on the racing waters of the Yalu. The Korean steersman saw the glint of the rifles at the same moment; the sight did not fill him with similar enthusiasm, and he settled all doubt that had hitherto possessed him as to the safety of the mission by abandoning the tiller and jumping overboard. For a moment the thought of the death penalty flashed across the little lieutenant's mind, and his hand instinctively closed on the butt of his revolver; but he had no use for cowards, dead or alive, so with a loud laugh he himself took the tiller, and, pulling the sheet taut, bore down upon the Russian junk.

Nor were the Russians refusing. If they had had any misgivings as to the identity of the Japanese boat, these were dispelled

as one of the bluejackets rove on to the halyards the emblem of the rising sun, so that it fluttered out above the lateen sail. The rival commanders must have given the ranges to their men simultaneously, for the smack of the small-bore rifles of both burst out together. The Russians stood off a couple of points so as to bring more rifles to bear. The range was now 500 yards. The Russian shots whizzed overhead, sang through the rigging, ripped tiny holes in the sail, and splintered the planks of the lofty bow. The Japanese answered deliberately,—the little lieutenant, with his foot on the tiller, the sheet in his right hand, and his glasses in his left, directing the fire.

Fifteen minutes of this, and suddenly the sail of the Russian junk went aback, round came her ponderous prow. She had had enough. The breeze again caught her great sail, and she headed up with the tide. The lieutenant reduced his firing strength by two as he ordered two bluejackets to man

the junk's stern-sweep: himself, he never moved either his foot from the tiller or his hand from the sheet, even though a bullet carried the glasses out of his left hand and scored a great sear in his forearm: he was going to have that junk, or perish in the attempt. The Russian commander evidently thought so too, for he only stood upon his new course long enough to see that the smaller vessel was overhauling him, when he put his helm over and headed for a sandbank. In three minutes she was aground, and her crew of nine soldiers wading to the shore. This gave the Japanese bluejackets their opportunity. They rested their rifles on the gunwale and let the magazines do their best. The water round the Russians became as agitated as the surface of a pond in a hailstorm. But the men made good their passage to the shore, and, opening out, doubled to the summit of the dune. The lieutenant brought his boat up alongside the abandoned junk,

and as his men made it fast they found in the corpses of two Russians the evidence of their good shooting; but they had not time to apprise the value of their capture, for it was up and into the water in pursuit. By this time the Russians had taken up a position to oppose a landing, and as the bluejackets waded to the sandbank they in their turn suffered the ordeal of a concentrated fire. But they reached the shore, and were advancing to the attack when suddenly they descried two more junks bearing down upon them from the extremity of the bank.

There is a limit to the odds which even a junior naval lieutenant dare encounter, so the youth doubled his men back to the water, and pushed both the junks off: at least, if he could not complete his skirmish, he would carry off the spoils of war.

V.

THE SACRIFICE OF O'TERU SAN.

May 1904.

A BOY and girl sat on a steep grass slope in a Japanese garden. The boy, who wore the apron affected by students, was talking earnestly—far too earnestly for his years, we in the West would have thought. The girl, whose *kimono* and paper sun-shade formed the only coloured relief to a background of fresh emerald green, was listening with downcast eyes.

"It is no use, O'Teru San," the youth said, almost mournfully; "I shall have to work like a common coolie, for we have not the money to continue my education." The maid offered no comment to this statement, and the boy continued the recital

of his troubles. "It is very, very hard," he said, "that I should have come from a family of princes, and have now to do menial work in order that I may live,—perhaps even be obliged to serve foreigners in some low capacity, and profess myself obedient to people whom I despise. To think of it, O'Teru San! from to-morrow I shall go to the College no more, and from the next day will be apprenticed to an artisan. I, who, as befits one of my station, next year was to go to the military school to become an officer; and now, just because my father has speculated badly in some foreign enterprise, I must give up all thought of the future and live in the present—a coolie!"

The youth cast himself over on his side, and although his companion did not look up, yet she knew that his brown eyes had filled with tears. There was a brief silence, during which Teru San was making up her

mind. Although to our Western ideas she was but a child, yet here in the East those whom we would still opine children have, in their teens, reached a mental state which we call maturity. The cruel fate which seemed about to ruin her companion's ambitions hurt her as deeply as if a bann had been placed upon herself. She also had her own ambitions. But her hopes for the future were bound up in the success or failure of this youthful student who had been in her life ever since she could remember. Personally, also, she did not wish to be the wife of a carpenter or a 'ricksha coolie.

"Is there no way?" she said; "will not your relations do something for you?" She turned and put her hand upon the shoulder of the prostrate student. He shook his head mournfully. In a moment the girl made up her mind. "Then Teru San will do something for you. O'Tanaka San, go

back to the school to-morrow. I will find the money."

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There was a grand entertainment at the Mitsui Club. The resident members of this great and exclusive family were giving a farewell send-off to a batch of officers of the Imperial Guard who were due to leave Tokyo on the following morning to join the transports collected in the Inland Sea. For the purpose of this entertainment the ten most popular Geishas in Tokyo had been retained.

The evening was half-way through, and the young men, grouped in easy attitudes around the room, were satiated with the ordinary efforts at female dancing. "Where is O'Teru San?" somebody shouted; others took up the cry and clapped their hands. A screen at the far end of the room was pushed aside; the little frail figure appeared in the opening. It was Teru San. She fell on her knees and bowed to the

ground, as is the etiquette on such occasions. Then she stood up in all her glory of gold and grey. A perfect round of applause greeted her, for at the moment she was the idol of young Tokyo. Even to the European estimate she was beautiful,—to young Tokyo, peerless. She glided in to the centre of the room, radiant in the knowledge of her success, magnificent in the blending colours of her finery, and she danced as young Tokyo had never seen a Geisha dance before. Her figure finished, she stepped down among the audience and gracefully acknowledged the congratulations which were heaped upon her. Surely this girl was happy, if the happiness of a Geisha is to be judged by popularity. Daintily she took the little china cups which were offered her; modestly she pressed them to her lips, just tasting the contents. Then they pleaded with her to dance again. All smiles, she retired to the stage, and gave a representation in grace-

ful movements of some old ballad of love and war, such as young Tokyo adored. Then, bowing low, she passed again behind the screen. And as the sound of the applause died in her ears, so did the smile of happiness from her face. Hastily she changed her *kimono*, and called for the jinricksha which was waiting for her in the courtyard.

It was a bitter night for poor Teru San; she was going now to meet her lover for the last time — for Tanaka, a lieutenant in the Imperial Guards, was also leaving in the morning to meet the Russians.

Such was the history of Teru San. When she had come to her resolution to find the money with which her lover was to be educated, she had gone straightway and sold herself — as many hundreds of other Japanese girls have done in similar circumstances — to the master of some tea-house. The house which she had selected

had been owned by a man who, long trained in the art, had seen the commercial value of the dainty little lass who falteringly offered to sign the indentures. He had paid a sufficient sum in cash to ensure the first year's fees of Tanaka's education; the successful Teru San's outside earnings had supplied the rest. Thus supported, her lover had passed from one grade to another, until now he was a dashing subaltern in the Guards. All that the young couple were waiting for was the day when the tea-house ransom should be paid in full, and Teru San free of her strange obligations. We of the West cannot understand this: in the East it is different.

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The leading company had been lying under the cover of a sand-dune since daybreak. The men were becoming restless: behind them they could hear the even rhythm of the three batteries of artillery

which were endeavouring to silence the Russian guns on the far side of the river, and ever and anon some projectile would whistle angrily above their heads, or, burying itself in front of them, would throw great showers of sand into their ranks. The men were getting restless at the delay which kept them from carrying out their orders. These orders were engraven in each man's heart, — for such is the system of the Japanese: when possible each man in the army, from the general of division to the humblest stretcher-bearer, knows exactly what is to be expected of him during the ensuing day, as far as the general staff can calculate the function of any particular unit.

This regiment of the Guards had orders to lie under cover as near as possible to the foot of the bridge which the sappers were constructing, and as soon as the structure was worthy, to push across it and turn the Russians from their positions

on the far side of the river. Since two o'clock in the morning they had been lying there, and it was now past mid-day and yet the bridge was not complete. Tanaka had crept up to his captain's side, and together they had crawled to the top of the sand-dune and watched the progress which the sappers were making. It seemed now that almost the last pontoon had been floated down. The little engineers were working like demons on the bridge-head, and as they worked the water all round the pontoons seemed alive with bursting shells. Time after time the men working on the hawsers were swept away, and as the cord passed from their lifeless grasp there were other willing hands ready to take it. There was no time to care for dead or wounded, there was no room for either on the pontoons, a man down was a man lost, and it served the interests of the State better to push his body into the boiling stream

rather than hamper the bridge-way with doctors and hospital attendants. For the fifth time that morning a salvo of bursting shells destroyed the nearest pontoons, carrying the working-party away with it. Yet, nothing daunted, fresh pontoons were pushed off and floated down, and a fresh company of sappers was there to lash the stanchions tight.

"They will never do it," said the captain, as it seemed that the latest effort had failed. "See, they are bringing down reinforcements from the bluff above us." It was true, — a column of Russian infantry was debouching from behind the hills on the opposite bank of the river, and was moving down to the threatening bridge. The Japanese gunners had seen them, and almost immediately the column was torn and shattered with bursting shell, but this counter was not sufficient to stay the Russian advance. Down the infantry pressed towards the

"A salvo of bursting shells destroyed the nearest pontoons."

water's edge; so near were they that the Guardsmen could make out the glint of the individual bayonets as they glistened in the mid-day sun.

"Now is our time," shouted Tanaka; "see, here come our orders." A staff officer galloped up; as he came, the two officers could see that the last pontoon had floated into its place, and that by wading it would be possible for the infantry to dash across. The staff officer shouted his orders—"Bridge-head! Guards, column of fours from the right."

The suspense was over. In a moment the battalion was on its feet, and Tanaka was racing with the men of the leading section for the bridge. They felt the pontoon sway under their feet — they jumped from side to side to avoid the mangled frames of dead and wounded sappers. A shell tore up the planks in front of them, and spattered them with the blood and flesh of some luckless

engineer. Through the cloud of smoke Tanaka could see that some of his men fell in the holes, others were hit. Now they are at the actual bridge-head, thirty yards of water, how deep, how shallow, who could say! All that they could see were the bayonets of the opposing Russians. They were almost down to the water's edge. Tanaka was the first at the actual bridge-head; what had happened to his captain he did not know. With one shout of "Banzai!" he leapt into the water, and all that he realised was that the men were leaping in beside him. For a moment it was waist-deep, then it was knee-deep, and now they are on dry land.

Of the next five minutes who shall speak accurately? All that Tanaka knew was that the sword-blade, which had been in his family for four hundred years, clashed roughly against a bayonet, and then fleshed true and hard. The impetus

from the slope above bore him and his companions back, but they made a stand at the water's edge, and that stand was sufficient to save the bridge-head. Company after company came splashing through the water, and soon the Russians were taking the steel in the back. It was a horrible *mêlée;* and when Tanaka really came to his senses, he was trying to form up his company amid the smoking guns of a captured Russian battery, while a corporal, chattering with excitement, was binding up his arm with a first field dressing. Until this moment he had not even known that he was wounded.

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There was no paper printed in Japanese which did not ring with the heroism of Lieutenant Tanaka of the Guards. There was hardly a shop-window in Tokyo which had not a coloured picture detailing the Lieutenant's heroism at the passage of the Yalu. For the moment there was no more

honoured name in all Japan. There was no woman in all the many islands, which comprise the Far Eastern Empire, prouder than the little white-skinned Geisha, Teru San. Now her self-sacrifice seemed as nothing. Whatever it might have cost, she had enabled her lover, not only to win his ambition, but also to place himself in the history of his country.

She had been making her toilet since four in the afternoon, for that very day Tanaka, the wounded hero, had returned to Tokyo. Even as she sat, rubbing the powder on her cheeks, she could hear the shouts of the crowd which were according him a public welcome. It was meet that she should look her best, for to-day was to be the greatest day in her life.

The telephone bell rang. Anxiously she waited for the message. Surely it could not be Tanaka; it was too soon; he had not yet had time to think of her. She was right—it was only a message from the big

rich American who, for the last two months, had been lavishing his attentions upon her, and who was now reduced to such a state that he had offered to ransom her at whatever price her master might name, if only she would consent to marry him and return with him to the States. A foreigner forsooth! And Teru San told the maid to tell the foreigner that she was ill, that she was out of business for an indefinite period until she should be again convalescent. She then sat quietly in her room and waited: it was possibly the happiest expectation in the whole of her strange and chequered life.

But her hero never came, even though she waited until the small hours of the morning. "He is in the hospital," she said to herself; "I shall hear from him to-morrow." But the morrow brought no message, and so it went on from day to day, from week to week, until it was announced in the 'Kokomin Shimbun' that

the hero Tanaka, decorated by the Emperor, and now employed on the General Staff, was betrothed to a daughter of the quality.

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And so it came about that Teru San may be the mother of American citizens.

VI.

THE FORLORN-HOPE AT KINCHAU.

CHEFOO, *June* 1904.

THREE Japanese infantrymen leant with their backs against a greasy sea-rock, which raised its slimy crest four feet above the level of the water. The three little men were in luck, since they were able to rest their rifles on the rock, while the less fortunate of their companions, waist-deep in the water, were wearied to death in keeping the breeches of their pieces out of the brine. The three seemed entirely indifferent to the discomfort of their surroundings, though the whole company had been wading in the mud-flats for the last three hours, and was now halted in a deep pool formed in a sand

depression. They were engaged in a comparison of their experiences during the last twelve hours. To the Western soldier the experiences of a lifetime would have been covered in the short space of time taken by the 4th Division of the Imperial Japanese army to carry at the point of the bayonet the walled town of Kinchau. To the Japanese soldiers it was but a delightful incident in the service which their country required of them. Their theme at the moment was the bloody grips they had been engaged in during the morning's street-fighting in Kinchau. Nor was it idle boasting, since the stains on the bayonet-catches of their rifles, blackening in the sun, gave sickening evidence of the carnage at which they had assisted. But the carnage behind them was nothing to that which they were to engage in before the sun set. At the moment the three blue-coated little soldiers appeared to take no interest in the lesser holocaust which was even yet taking

place in the vicinity. They were discussing the past, which had been washed more vividly scarlet than the present, between the mouthfuls of sodden boiled rice which they scooped in handfuls out of the wicker satchels suspended to their belts. Such is the character of the Japanese soldier.

There was the terrifying rush of a great projectile above their heads. A hissing plunge, a half-subdued report, lashings of blinding sea-spray. The thick ranks of the company fell aside like driven skittles, and five helpless masses of human flesh bobbed convulsively in the water, which in patches showed yellow, brown, and red. A shriek of derisive laughter from the spectators who picked themselves whole from the *mêlée* was all the dirge vouchsafed to the victims—more, it was all they would have desired. Mahtsomoto, the Osaka recruit, leaned forward from his rock and picked up the cap of one of his fallen comrades. He fitted it upon his own head to replace

that lost in the early morning struggle. His action appealed to the simple humour of those round him; they clapped him on the back and bubbled with mirth in the ecstasy of their congratulations. The mutilated remains floated clear, and the ranks closed up.

Then an officer came wading through the sea. He shouted an order to the major of the battalion. Another order passed from mouth to mouth down the line of company officers, and the three little infantrymen had to stow their rice-baskets away quickly and take their rifles from the rest which the slimy rock had given them. The battalion was to move. Where and how the men in the ranks did not know; but as the water descended first to their knees and then to their ankles, they realised that they were moving off to the left, and to their great joy the direction was taking them nearer to the Russian position. As their feet made the dry shore that posi-

tion became defined to them. There was no mistaking it, for the gunboats, having spent the whole morning dragging for blockade-mines in the bay, had now found a channel by which they could safely take advantage of their light draught, and their shells were bursting all along the summit of the slope which frowned in front of the advancing infantry; also, far away to the left, the dark shadow of Mount Sampson's slopes was emitting countless little jets of flame. They came and went almost with mathematical precision. These jets were the burning charges of the massed Japanese field-batteries. They were adding to the Inferno which crowned the ridges where the Siberian Rifles, grim, dogged, and hungry, lay prostrate behind the filled gabions waiting for the climax which they knew this fierce cannonade but prefaced.

The advancing infantry could trace the enemy's position from the bursting of the Japanese shells, as minutely as if they were

reading a chart. They could see the great column of lurid smoke and flame shoot upwards as some 6-inch projectile struck the lip of the parapets; and as the smoke from these explosions mushroomed out and hung as a murky pall above the works, the darker patches were mottled with the white smoke-discs of bursting shrapnel. The din was deafening, for underlying the deeper detonations was a ceaseless crash of small-arms, punctuated with the grinding rattle of automatic weapons.

The infantry battalion began to crawl upwards as its direction brought it under the cover of the ridge. It was now crossing ground recently held by the leading battalion of the 4th Division. The ranks frequently opened, to avoid trampling upon the trail of human suffering which marked the accuracy of Russian shooting. The head of the 4th Division had been massed so thickly behind the ridge that, at a glance, it was possible to tell the nature

of each projectile that had caused the ruin. Here an 8-inch Obuchoff had swept a dozen valiant little bluecoats from their feet, and they lay a mutilated mass; here automatic and mitrailleuse had mown down a file of men, and they lay prostrate or sat self-dressing their wounds much as they had fallen; and here solitary yellow faces, turning tawny grey in death-tint, told of the Berdan pellet through the brain. Some few with lesser hurts than the majority raised their weakening limbs to cheer their comrades on, and there seemed to be no tongue, excepting those for ever still, too parched to articulate "*Banzai!*"

"*Banzai! Banzai! Banzai!*" shouted Mahtsomoto and his comrades with him as they leapt from side to side to avoid a prostrate form, or, little recking of the pain they caused, in passing seized and shook some outstretched hand. Who shall stop such soldiers! What force under

heaven can stay men who go forth to battle in like spirit? Look at the battalion as it passes beneath you. Look at the midday sun glinting on the points of the fixed bayonets; look at the dull black stains at the root of those same bayonets —who shall stop them! Wait; in war there is time for all things!

The companies deploy and lie down on the unexposed slope of the knoll—it is nothing more than a knoll—and its summit is swept with a race of nickel, steel, and lead. As the men look back they see, after the last company has deployed and is flat behind them, that they themselves have doubled the human wreckage on the plain. Like the desperate players that they are, they have doubled the stakes. The play is high; but they will have to play higher yet before the game is won—or lost.

The major is kneeling at the head of his prostrate battalion; a dark little staff-officer

kneels at his side. The whistle summons the company commanders. Upright they stride over the reclining men. What the major says the men do not yet know: the majority do not care; they are lying on their backs taking in the wonderful scene behind them.

In front of them are only Russian field-works, which are contemptible, and glorious death. Behind them unfolds the panorama of their beloved country's strength, power, and — what perhaps does not appeal so much to them — devotion. To the left is the great blue shallow bay in which until recently they were standing. The middle distance is broken by five gunboats, whose war-dulled hulls sparkle with the constant flashes from the guns. The dirty smoke from their funnels, driven southwards, mingles with the great sombre pall above the Russian works, so that the bright sunlight is scarred with a band of sullen black. Half a dozen torpedo-boats are circling in

the roadstead, worrying spitefully, like terriers at a beast at bay, willing to strike, yet conscious of the power of this particular enemy. Well may they be cautious, for the surface of the water is torn into spits of foam, as projectiles fall without intermission in and amongst the ships.

But it is on land that the panorama is more impressive. Behind the prostrate troops, from their very feet, almost as far as eye can reach, the narrow tongue of land is packed with masses of infantry. The sun runs riot upon acres of bared and flashing bayonets, right away as far as the mud walls of Kinchau, which those very bayonets had won that morning. Men and horse, fifty thousand men, massed for the fleshing, suffering death at random—a target impossible to miss—until the moment shall arrive for them to put their crude patriotism to the final test.

The company officers return to their commands, and the word passes down the line

that the battalion, together with the sister battalion lying parallel with them on the left, is to assault the nearest of the Russian works. "Open up the Russian forts" is the expression used, and a suppressed murmur of "Banzai!" flickers down the ranks as the men raise themselves on to their knees.

"Right shoulder" a little. It is useless to make men climb the steeper portion of the peak. "Right shoulder!" and the easier path over the saddle will be found. One minute, and the men can almost feel the rush of air from the sleet of projectiles passing immediately above them; the next, and through the gaps torn in the ranks of the company in front of them they see their goal, and intuitively make mental measure of the distance to be crossed. Two hundred yards to the bottom of the dip—here the scattered buildings of a fishing village—and then four hundred yards of gentle climb to that sky-line, with its demarcation of un-

ceasing flashes and its dull yellow-grey curtain of clinging picric cloud. Above the thunder of battle—the crash and rattle of the guns—the grinding of the automatic death-machines—and the sickening swish of metal sweeping poor human frames by scores before it,—rises the full-throated war-cry of Japan—*Banzai!*—"*Live a thousand years!*" and almost before the men have realised that they are facing a tornado, those that have not been stricken down have reached the cover of the village.

What a trail they have left behind them! The rearmost companies have to open out and direct to right and left, for the slope is a mosaic of prostrate uniforms. The crash and racket on their front intensifies, and beneath the rain of projectiles the meagre walls of the village crumble and subside. A haze of sun-baked mud-dust rises from the subsiding pile, and, clinging in the dead air, covers somewhat the carnage in its

midst. A pent-house falls and crushes half a platoon beneath it. A bevy of terror-stricken women and children, bolted by flame, shell, and sights of death from their hiding-places, dash blindly for the open—a moment, and they too swell the tale of massacre. The full-throated war-cry of Japan is dead. A thin wail of *Banzai!* goes up, an officer seizes the emblem of the rising sun, and, bending low to meet the leaden blizzard, dashes for the slope. Where ten minutes ago he had had a company to follow him, he now finds ten or fifteen men. To right and left little knots of desperate infantrymen dash out into the fury of the blast—only to wither before it. For perhaps ten seconds the colour is erect and falters onward. Then it is down. Mahtsomoto is at his captain's heel: he seizes the loved emblem and raises it again. He turns back to wave it, and is swept from his legs; he struggles to his knees; the flag is upright again, for one

second only, and then as if by magic the firing stops, and for one second the Russians jump up upon their works, and wave their caps and shout the shout of victory. The two Japanese battalions which furnished the forlorn-hope have ceased to exist. The Russians cheered, and then the Japanese supporting artillery reopened, and the struggle returned to its normal state. The forlorn-hope had failed—but what did that matter? were there not forty thousand as good infantry massed behind the ridge, prepared to carry on the desperate work which the two lost battalions had begun?

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By sunset the Japanese had carried this work, and the whole line of Russian defences went with it.

"By sunset the Japanese had carried this work."

VII.

THE MILITARY TRIUMVIRATE.

TOKYO, *8th July* 1904.

THREE men are standing in front of a large hanging map. The chart is on so large a scale that it screens the whole expanse of wall at one end of the room. The shortest of the three men holds a telegram in his hand, and as he reads from it one of the members of the Triumvirate runs his finger along the red line which seems to bifurcate the suspended chart. Having satisfied themselves that the reading of the map synchronises with the information contained in the telegram, the three men group round the table in the centre of the room. These three are worthy of close observation, for they form the Triumvirate that

is ruling Japan's destinies at the present moment. The small, podgy, pock-marked man, whom no caricaturist could fail to lampoon as a frog, is Baron Oyama, the Roberts of Japan. We use the parallel to our own great soldier only as a figure of location. In temperament there is no likeness between the two, except that each in his respective country is a great soldier. And what a history lies behind this diminutive field-marshal! He has seen the latent fighting strength of his nation develop in a single generation from the standard attained in the medieval civilisation of the East to that of a first-class Western Power; has lived to command it in the act of overthrowing the vaunted strength of a Western Power. But to few great military leaders has such an opportunity come as has presented itself to the present generalissimo of Japan's army. Twelve years ago this very marshal was called upon to command in the field against the

strength of China. The opening phases of his present campaign were conducted over the very ground through which he then manœuvred his victorious troops. Does it come often in the lifetime of a general to operate twice over the same squares of the map? In the present operations the knowledge gleaned in that first campaign has been worth an army corps.

The little general seated at the marshal's right is the Kitchener of Japan. If we had not known that he was Japanese, his quick dark eye, dapper figure, and pointed beard would have led us to believe that he was a Spaniard, or perhaps a Mexican. General Baron Kodama is the executive brain of the Japanese general staff. Of the third member of the Triumvirate, however, we have no parallel in the British army. Like his illustrious associates, he also is small. He is fair for a Japanese, and the splash of grey at either temple enhances the fairness

of his skin. Save for a rare and very pleasant smile, the face is unemotional. The dark eyes are dreamy, and the poorest expression of the great brain that works behind them. This is General Fukushima, whose genius has been the concrete-mortar which has cemented into solid block the rough-hewn material of Japan's general staff.

These are the three men who hitherto have repeatedly overthrown Russia's military strength in the Far East. And since the Japanese army of invasion landed in Korea and Manchuria, it has been this Triumvirate, first from this very room and the three adjacent ones, and latterly at the front, that has controlled the destinies of the army in the field. This is the Japanese system, this, perhaps, the secret of the Japanese success. The strategical factor in the operations is the general staff, wherever it may be located. Whether in Tokyo, in the field, or in Timbuctoo, the

tactical remains with the generals commanding in the field.

There is a key resting in the safe keeping of the chief of the staff which, if it came into our possession, would disclose many score of admirable charts. They are marked in colour, and each set has its complementary set to meet each contingency that might arise, favourable or untoward, even to the invasion of Japan. Attached are records of the varied supplies stored within easy reach of the home ports. Every kind of material that modern forethought has considered necessary for every contingency in war,—from railway material suited to the plains of Manchuria, and baulks of timber to furnish platforms for heavy artillery destined to bombard Port Arthur, to shore-torpedo tubes prepared against a hostile landing on the home seaboard.

These are the three men in the main responsible for all this, — yet stay with

me a moment more. They are leaving the modest building which represents Japan's military strength in Tokyo,—this building which, though so unpretentious and insignificant, yet has such a far-reaching shadow, — the marshal and his two chief lieutenants are leaving it, for to-night is their last night in the capital; to-morrow they will leave Japan to control the destinies of the army in the field. They are due at a farewell complimentary dinner given by the heads of sister departments. Just have one glimpse at them as they sit on the floor in strange alignment round the three walls of the banqueting hall. For the moment all that is of the West is forgotten; they are now mere Orientals, trifling with the dainty Geisha maidens, plying them with food and drink; they are entranced with the semi-barbaric dancing of the *première danseuse* of the house wherein they sup, and they partake of the merriment of the cup as if there were no

such distraction in the wide world as war. Yet even as they sit, there has come to the men on duty at the War Department a detail of new ground that has been broken within two thousand metres of Port Arthur's outer works, of grim casualties to covering infantry entailed in this pushing forward of the parallel. Nevertheless, as the messenger who brought the news from the war bureau stands outside in the passage, sipping the cup of green tea which some *musmé* has brought him, all he hears is the spirited rhythm of the *sâmâsân*. . . .

On the morrow the Ministers Plenipotentiary and Envoys Extraordinary of all the great Western Powers, glittering in their bullion-charged dresses, will be present on the platform to wish the Triumvirate "God-speed."

VIII.

A VISIT TO TOGO'S RENDEZVOUS.

CHEMULPO, *April.*

THE man at the wheel seemed to be steering by instinct. It was so dark that, as we clung to the rail on the bridge, we could not see the whaleback of the destroyer. All that we could tell was that we were passing in through an archipelago of islands. The false horizon which their rocky summits from time to time vouchsafed to us was, however, the only proof we had of this. The lieutenant-commander maintained a discreet silence. It was his business to convey us to the rendezvous under cover of darkness, not to explain the intricacies of his uncharted course. He was politeness itself, and never tired of

relating his experiences in the destroyer fight off Liautishan. Not once, but a dozen times during our brief stay with him, did he take us forward and point with pride at the marks which that struggle had left upon his boat. His little beady eyes would sparkle like electric points when he called to mind the details of that desperate fighting. How it seemed a miracle that the destroyers had not collided, how the stained muzzles of the 6-pounders almost touched as the shell-like vessels came abreast. How his bridge was torn and scored by splinters. How his sub-lieutenant and signalman were carried overboard by the same projectile. It was all marvellously interesting, but it was not as interesting in the recital as the circumstances of our present position. We were entering the passage which led to the rendezvous of Admiral Togo's fleet.

It does not matter here who we were or why we were allowed to make the visit. But it was so arranged that we boarded

the destroyer late in the afternoon, and it was dark, pitch dark, before we made the landmarks which would have disclosed the situation.

Steadily at half speed the destroyer held on her course. There were no lights,—as far as we could see there were no points at all beyond the stars by which the master could correct his bearings. Silently, almost weirdly, the long thin streak of a boat slipped through the water. The sea was as smooth as a frozen lake. Suddenly the commander put his hand on the telegraph. He peered into the darkness ahead, we could see nothing, but after a moment's hesitation his hand went down, and almost immediately we were going full speed astern. Then it was, and then only, that we saw a dim shadow of a body in front of us. For the first time we descried a light. The signal lamp was in requisition. A call, an answer, and then all was darkness again, and we were going half speed forward past

the guardship. Presently, as it were out of nowhere, we were able to discern the dim outline of a moving body on either beam. These outlined into thin long streaks like unto ourselves. In short, if the night had not been clear, we would easily have mistaken them for our own reflection on the mist. Then from the port side came a hail. The answer was given in Japanese, again the telegraph spoke to the engineer. Slow—and in a few seconds we were being led by the pilot boat right in through the lines of Togo's fleet.

It was a strange sensation. Here we were passing between two lines of giant engines of war. We could just make out each indistinct mass that in the darkness indicated a ship. But there was never a light and rarely a sound. Once a picket-launch steamed up quite close to us. We could hear the pant of her engines and just make out the suspicion of flame from the rim of her funnel. Then the pilot boat

shouted us clear, and we bore down upon one of the darker patches. We hoped that it was the Mikasa, and that we were destined to spend the night on the flagship. But the commander put our mind to rest on that point with the simple information that he was about to tie up for the night at the torpedo transport. . . .

It has not been given to every one to witness the victorious Japanese fleet lying at anchor in its rendezvous. It was a sight once seen not easily to be forgotten. The four squadrons lay at anchor in four lines. Just clear of them lay the transports, colliers, torpedo transports, and the dockyard vessels. At the entrance to the bay lay the guardship and the destroyers. Three destroyers and one cruiser were on the mud to facilitate the attentions of the dockyard hands. Two of the battleships had colliers alongside, and another of the colliers was filling the bunkers of two torpedo boats. Across the entrance to the

bay one could just make out the faint line of a boom. Since we had heard so much of the damage which the Russian guns had wrought upon the Japanese fleet we looked anxiously for evidence of it. As the morning light strengthened we scrutinised each battleship in turn. There were six of them, great gaunt leviathans stripped for the fray. Though the friendly glass made each rail and stanchion clear, yet we could discover no serious trace of this ill-usage of which we had heard. Then for the first-class cruisers, they at least had been knocked to pieces. Here they were, four of them, anchored line ahead. There was nothing that the non-professional eye could detect amiss with their lean symmetry. The picture was in a manner oppressive: there was nothing within view that was not connected with scientific butchery and destruction in its most ruthless and horrible form. The ships themselves, stripped of everything that was wooden or super-

fluous, gave a morbid impression of merciless majesty and might. The nakedness of their dressing accentuated the ferocity of the gaping guns. One thought of the shambles on the main deck of the *Variag* and the fate of the *Petropavlovsk*, and shuddered. But in all, if not exhilarating, it was a magnificent picture. And one bowed in tribute to the diabolical and misapplied genius of man. . . .

At three o'clock came the crowning scene. A signal fluttered up from the bridge of the flag-ship. As if by one movement the little torpedo craft slipped away towards the entrance, while the whole air hummed with the rattle of chain-cables. Signal after signal from the flag-ship, and then majestically Admiral Togo took his fleet out of the rendezvous to do battle with his country's enemy. This was a soul-stirring spectacle. . . .

IX.

THE PATH IN THE EAST IS STRANGE.

YINKOW, *September.*

THE Foreigner was unutterably bored. Only those who, buttoned up to the neck in an absurd tunic, have to attend similar functions in artificially heated saloons, can realise the boredom bred of a succession of diplomatic soirées. The Foreigner was bored. He had nodded to the men he knew from his Embassy, had bowed himself low in answer to the courteous salutations of other foreign mocking-birds like unto himself, had kissed the tips of the fingers of perhaps two smiling dames, and was now settled with his arm on the balustrade waiting until the season might be seemly for him to slip down the grand stairway into the cool outside.

The chatter of feminine voices, the flashing of dazzling jewellery, the nodding aigrettes, the electro-plated magnificence of waist-laced cavaliers, interested him no more. The panoply of peace! He gazed at the stream of grinning faces as they moved past him. There was not one that interested him. He fell musing to himself. Was it a diplomatic reception, was it a carnival, or was it a *corroboree*—the modern development of those orgies the description of which had fascinated him in perusal when a boy?

There was a temporary dissolution of the crowd. An archduke or a princess was passing, and the ushers fought to make a passage through the throng of gilded guests. As the way opened the Foreigner caught sight of a face on the far side of the salon which seemed to reflect the very thoughts uppermost in his own mind. A little swarthy face. A face which, in spite of the low forehead, beady black eyes, and

Mongolian bluntness, was full of intelligence. At the moment cynical intelligence. The dwarfish body which supported the head was clothed in an unobtrusive uniform, and the little capable fingers of the yellow hands were playing nervously with a plumed shako. An impulse seized the Foreigner, and he walked across the room. Though he was not acquainted with the little yellow soldier standing against the salon wall with his shoulder scarce reaching to the dado, yet he knew him to be an extra-attaché to the Japanese Legation, and his own thoughts seemed to be so accurately reflected in the expression on the stranger's face that the Foreigner was drawn towards him.

At the first salutation the diminutive attaché started visibly, and, taken unawares, bowed deeply and apologetically, as is the custom of his people. The Foreigner uttered a few commonplaces in the diplomatic tongue, which resulted in

more nervous agitation of the shako. It was evident that the little man did not understand. He glanced furtively up into the bigger man's face, smiled inanely, and drew in his breath between his teeth. The Foreigner tried English and German in turn, but their use elicited no reply beyond the deliberately sucked-in breath. An awkward silence, and then the little attaché thrust his hand in his breast-pocket and produced a card. This was handed to the Foreigner with a courtly bow. It read—

Lieutenant H. Kamimoto,
Imperial Japanese Army.

The Foreigner bowed, shook hands with his tiny acquaintance, and then, the time being propitious, passed out into the cool of night, hailed a fiacre, and drove home. The little olive face remained in his mind, the expression of cynicism he had first seen in it, the instant change to apologetic courtesy, as soon as he spoke, and the depth of intelli-

gence contained in the eyes, which for the rest had an uninteresting setting.

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Three years later the Foreigner found himself among the guests at a midsummer party. After the usual compliments, he accompanied his hostess into the garden, where the younger folk were disporting themselves upon the tennis-courts. For a moment the Foreigner was left alone to watch the play. A lithe little figure in flannels was the heart and soul of the game. Few could persevere against his returns, none place a ball beyond his reach. His play was an exhibition of marvellous skill, the subtle strength of controlled energy.

"Who is your dark little Renshaw?" asked the Foreigner as he rejoined his hostess.

"That is Mr Kamimoto, a Cambridge friend of George's. He is a Japanese; doesn't he play a splendid game, and such a funny little fellow too?"

Kamimoto, and the mental vision of the Foreigner went back to the little apologetic figure with nervous fingers playing round the edge of a full-dress shako.

The set was over, and when the congratulations had lulled the Foreigner had a look at the little olive face. It was the same, only the cynical suggestion of superiority had gone out of it. The infinite courtesy remained. Presently the Foreigner was able to step to the little man's side. He put out his hand to him.

"Have we not met before?"

A smile flickered under the stiff little impertinence of a moustache, and the answer came in perfect English.

"You have often called at the Japanese Legation: perhaps you have seen me there."

"No; Paris, I think!"

The breath was drawn in between the closed teeth. "You are, I think, mistaken. We Japanese are so much alike. I have never been in Paris." This answer given,

the little man threw the Foreigner a signal glance which he understood. A soldier's freemasonry. The Foreigner understood, and as he moved away, he noticed that though the little attaché appeared quite at ease with the men, yet he was awkward in his courtesy to the daughters of the house who flitted round him with refreshments. The Foreigner's interests were aroused. He would cultivate this little oddity, who was an attaché to a legation one year and a Cambridge undergraduate the next, and who politely denied past acquaintances. The Foreigner moved aside to do his duty by his hostess and her daughters, and wherever he turned he noticed that Kamimoto was observing him.

Later in the evening, when the guests were retiring early in anticipation of a long day's boating picnic on the morrow, the Foreigner found little Kamimoto at his elbow. "May I come to your room and talk to you before we turn in?"

"Certainly, I shall be more than pleased." Five minutes later they were seated on a sofa in the Foreigner's bedroom.

"Well, my student-militant, explain it all. What is the reason of the present masquerade?" and the Foreigner greeted the little attaché with a genial slap on the knee.

The breath was drawn in again. It might have been that the familiarity was resented, or—and this is more probable—it gave the speaker an extra second to debate his answer.

"It means that the educational institutions of England are suitable to the improvement of my mind!"

"But such improvement as you desire is surely not found in the Universities—the military academy and college would seem to be more in your particular line? Remember there was a first lieutenant's braid on that shako in Paris."

The smile, which immediately drives out

the unintelligent look from the average Japanese face, flickered for a moment, and then the attaché answered, "You are very clever to remember that. But you know that your military institutions are closed to me."

"My dear sir, you can go and see them any day you like. I can arrange——!"

"You are very good, and I thank you, but you couldn't arrange for me to become an inmate—a cadet, fellow of your cadets. I expect that I know all that could be learned through the 'open door.' It is the shut door that I must study."

"But being a soldier—why try the Universities? In their educational attainments they profess to despise us. We are to them no more than the blue-bloused butcher—a very necessary evil, necessary to the economy of life—salaried assassins!"

"But you draw your officers from the same class as fills your Universities. You even have University candidates. It is

not the system so much as the man that I desire to know."

"To what end?"

"There is only one end for us Japanese: that is the service of our country."

"How long have you been at Cambridge?"

"Two years: my period there is now finished. I seek a new field!"

"And that is——?"

"The reason of my coming to see you here to-night!"

There was a pause: the Foreigner looked earnestly at his little companion. It was evident that he was working upon some line, and the Foreigner was not quite satisfied that the line was unmasked.

"Anything I can do?" was tamely interpolated.

"You can supply what I most want,—I wish to see the life of your people as you see it."

"Certainly; if you will revert to your

military rank, I will have you put up for my club!"

Kamimoto shook his head. "I have already received that honour. As far as your 'open door' is concerned I know most things. I have moved about your service clubs, meeting with courtesy on every hand. The courtesy that chills, that brackets one in the estimation of your countrymen with a little piece of lacquer. I am interesting because I am Japanese and small of stature. Finding no sympathy among the Englishmen of my own calling, I tried the women. What was open to me? The women of the streets. There was nothing there. Then I tried your colleges. Perhaps that was better; but your young men are such children. One tires of them. And even though I can equal them in all their games, and maybe pass them in their work, yet I am to them the little piece of *bric-a-brac* still."

The Foreigner leaned back in his chair and smiled. The line was unmasking itself. "Surely you are not suffering under the lash of forced abnegation: is not humility, when working in the public cause, the great characteristic of you Japanese—the main doctrine of your far-famed chivalry?"

The little man's eyes sparkled like coals of fire.

"I know to what you refer. The whimsical ethics of some past age. Conditions that are as traditional as your own age of knightly chivalry, but which are sufficiently fanciful to prey upon the imagination of such countrymen of yours, who, living amongst us, have succumbed to the spell of the artistic beauties of our country. But believe me, good friend, this brush-business in cheap-coloured virtue is as painful to us as the patronising tolerance which classifies us as children. Only let me know you, and I will disabuse your mind of the many Japanese fables which

pervert the understanding of the Western world. If all our antiquaries were not foreigners, this load of libel would not have been added to the burden which my country has to bear." The line was now unmasked, and from that day there sprang up between the Eastern and Western soldier a friendship which ripened into affection as months cemented the acquaintance.

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Kamimoto was sitting in the Foreigner's rooms in Jermyn Street. It was not the same Kamimoto we had known a year before. In rank, in stature, in dress even, it was the same man. But in expression of face it was another. The face was the true type of the Japanese Samurai aristocrat, but it was the face of the Japanese aristocrat who had conquered the mysteries of the West.

Kamimoto blew the ash off the end of his cigar before he answered the question

which the Foreigner had put to him. Then he answered in that grave manner which characterised his more thoughtful conversation, "You are in error. If you consider that our national morality as typified by our diplomatic morality is based upon, or even influenced by, the old doctrines, then you pay a poor compliment to those doctrines, and upset the laboured calculations of those foreigners who find in the fashionable idiosyncrasy of a past age an ideal standard for modern moulding. Don't be gulled by the enthusiasm of fanatical savants. There is one creed which rules all Japanese public morality. Balance the chances, and then pursue the wisest course. All conditions must be subservient to the means by which you attain and maintain the wisest course. Take for instance our alliance with you. You and I have split a bottle over this diplomatic issue. In common with the beetles that crawl, you believe that we have both served our own

ends by this diplomatic stroke. What your aims are I suppose only your diplomats know; what are the aims of Japan every Japanese knows. This alliance, for the nonce, was, to all intents and purposes, the wisest course, for it was the only course. But it is not what we desired most. You come into it as far as we are concerned as a Hobson's choice. It would have suited us better to have effected the alliance with Russia which Ito failed to negotiate. This alliance would have been offensive against you. Having with Russia's aid undermined your power in the Far East, we could have dealt with Russia in our own time. We do not fear Russia, and we have cause for our confidence. This will soon be brought home to you as the outcome of this new alliance, in spite of the fact that it has been heralded by you as a guarantee for the peace of the East in the immediate future. Are you so blind as not to see that our aspirations to blot

you out, our main menace in the Far East, failed through Russia's rapacity. Well, her blood be upon her own head; but there are those who wish it had been the other way. Come, let us drink another bottle to the alliance, and 'our enemies our friends.'"

"I wish you would not talk such nonsense in such a serious tone: you almost make me believe that you mean what you are saying!"

A smile flickered across Kamimoto's face. "In which you have the true diplomatic force. That is one thing you Englishmen cannot teach us. You can teach us how to build ships and guns, to make armour-plate and gas-engines, but you can teach us nothing in diplomacy. The pop of that cork proves it. We will drink to our alliance, with three times three!"

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The world has revolved for another year. The Foreigner's headquarters were now at Tientsin. His country had required his

services in the field for Military Intelligence which North China had opened up. Trouble was in the air, and an anæmic Cabinet was now in terror lest the diplomatic stroke which eighteen months ago it had vaunted as a peace-ensuring measure should prove diametrically the opposite. The Foreigner, in the pursuance of his duties, found himself at Port Arthur. His mission was that of a coal-contractor, his bearing that of a British officer. His disguise would not have deceived an Englishman, therefore the fact that he was not interfered with meant that the police had already sampled him and found him harmless.

The Foreigner felt that his chin was rough, so he turned into the first hairdresser's that the highway presented, which looked both respectable and clean. It was a Japanese institution. The majority of petty industries on the Russian-Manchurian seaboard are Japanese. The Foreigner looked for a chair. For the

moment there was none. Four Russian officers from the garrison were filling heavily all the available space. The Foreigner knew sufficient Russian to warrant his being discovered as an Englishman if he attempted to speak it in Port Arthur. He was surprised at the freedom of speech of the Russian officers with regard to their professional duties. It seemed that this hairdresser's was a sort of morning club-house. *Vodka* and beer could be served from an *auberge* next door. In due course the Foreigner took his place in the chair. One look in the cheval-glass, and in his surprise he nearly jumped out of the seat. There behind him, lather and brush in hand, and a spotless apron round his waist, stood Kamimoto.

"Shave or hair cut, sir?"

The Foreigner composed himself in a moment, and settled back in his chair. He was reflecting. Kamimoto's question had shown him that, though he was

masquerading as a German coal-merchant, it was patent to all that he was British; while here stood his Japanese prototype, a perfect barber, reading the minds of the Russian officers from morning till night. The barber's own words came back to him. "You can teach us how to make armour-plate and gas-engines, but you can teach us nothing in diplomacy!"

As Kamimoto handed the Foreigner a towel he said, "If you are staying in the hotel, I can come and shave you before breakfast. Very good, sir, what number? —23—very good. 7 o'clock to-morrow. Good morning, sir—thank you!"

The Foreigner left marvelling greatly.

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The Foreigner was again desperately bored. His Government, seeing that he had knowledge of Russia and Russian Manchuria, had selected him to represent them with the Japanese Army. He, with some fifteen other foreigners, as weary of

life as himself, had now been with the Japanese Army the matter of a month or so. Courteous discourtesy hedged them in on every side. They were within sight of everything that they came to see, yet they saw nothing. Everything had to be done by rule. On the march the horses must proceed at a walk, and no foreigner might be out of sight of the interpreter told off to dry-nurse him. For three long, hot, desperate weeks they had been confined within the four walls of a filthy Manchurian town. Many of the number were down with abdominal complaints bred of bad feeding, want of exercise, and mental annoyance. Yet the Japanese officer in charge brought his spurred heels together with a snap, bowed low, smiled his superior smile, and expressed his sympathy. This sympathy was as insipid and cheap as the thin Japanese imitation of lager which the unwilling hosts produced on feast-days.

The Foreigner was walking moodily and in solitude round the broad rampart of the town. Every indication of war stretched away to the north. But it was not for him. A sabre clinked behind him. He imagined it was worn by some officious sentry sent to chase him from the wall, and he refused to turn. Then an arm was slipped through his. He turned. It was Kamimoto.

The little soldier looked hard and fit. He was less sleek, it is true; but his eyes showed that he was more a man than when he had shared the Foreigner's rooms in Jermyn Street. The star and three tapes on his sleeve showed that he now commanded a company. The Foreigner took the delicate little hand and shook it warmly. The beady eyes twinkled.

"Aha! it is not all beer and skittles," Kamimoto said, smiling.

"The beer is not beer, and there are no skittles."

Kamimoto looked serious a moment, then he said, "I had heard this; I feared as much. It was foolish of you to come. Do you not remember all that I used to tell you in England. You thought I was deceiving you. That shows that I knew you better than you knew me. We Japanese know you foreigners better than you know us. Hence the fact that you look darkly towards our outposts and almost wish that you were a Russian. But I liked you too well to deceive you. As you know, I am not of the bigoted anti-foreign section. If we had done worse than we have at present, if we should chance do worse ultimately, I shall be ruled out by the popular feeling of my own country. That is, if the bloody work ahead should spare me. But it is all wrong, all this slaughter——!"

"What have you seen? — what have you been in?"

"I—I, the Kamimoto that you know,

have been in nothing; but my company was at Nanshan, Telitz, Tashichaou, and Haicheng. It has lost 90 per cent of its original strength. What do we gain? Knowledge of the truth of the belief that we are better men than the foreigner whom we were bred to despise! If we were so assured of this fact, why should we purchase the proof at a price that must eventually tell against us. No; I am Samurai enough to do my duty. But I have sipped of the West long enough to value the lives of my fellows more than the aggrandisement of a particular selfish and hidebound sect. Do you not know what success spells for Japan? Militarism, the curse of the past, will be the curse of the future, and its new foundations will be Japanese and Russian tombstones——"

"Come, come, Kamimoto; this is strange talk, coming as it does from you."

The little man burst out laughing.

"Forget it, then. But how about yourself?"

"I—well, I have seen nothing."

"What do you wish to see?—surely in another's quarrel a telescope is good enough."

The Foreigner put his hand on his little friend's shoulder. "Can I not give you back your words, Kamimoto? you should know me better than that."

Kamimoto was silent for a moment; he was gazing into the distance. Presently he turned to the Foreigner.

"Remember," he said, "that I am a Japanese officer, and I possess, perhaps, Japanese secrets. But I will do for you all that I can. I came to see you to-day because I felt for you in the trouble which I knew, and many of us knew, was gnawing at your heart. Now, look where I point. Do you see that long low ridge of down, the one to the left of the two peaks with a saddle between them?" The

Foreigner nodded assent. "You see the whole plain covered with tall, waving *kouliang?* Well, on the day when they let you march out of here it will be easy for you to lose yourself in the *kouliang;* try and reach that down just before sundown. And now, *sayōnara!*" He saluted the Foreigner gravely, and in a moment had slipped down the ramp. It must have cost him much to tell even so little. What a quaint paradox was this little scrap of an infantry captain!

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The Foreigner felt that there was truth in his friend's remark, to the effect that a man was a fool to court hurt in another's quarrel. All through the long day, as he had lain with his body squeezed against the squelching sides of a two-foot mud head-cover, this thought had been forced upon him a hundred times. He was in the front line of a great battle. The ceaseless screech and whirr of countless

shells passing backwards and forwards overhead was sufficient evidence of this, even if at the moment, five yards away, two little Japanese infantrymen had not, with their shoulders, been levering the corpse of a comrade on to the mud parapet to make the head-cover better. Even if behind a Chinese grave-mound, ten yards in front of him, a hard-hit *sous-officier* had not been nursing a horrible wound, the excruciating agony of which, though it could draw no sound from the tortured man's tongue, caused a thin blue stream of blood to trickle from the sufferer's lip, bitten through and through.

There was a lull in the din of war. A restful lull, broken now only by the song of the bullet, slapping its way through the millet-stalks, or sousing into the wet mud with a sound that reminded the Foreigner of a horse landing in bog. The din of battle! Only those who lie in the firing-

line and hear the constant screech of the shell as they cleave their terrible way through the air above know the true sounds of modern war. The whip-like smack of the bursting shell, the swish of the scattering bullets, are nothing to the mocking screech of these damned messengers of death pursuing each other, as if in competition to complete the awful object of their hideous mission. The whole welkin is discordant with their tumult; you feel the rush of misplaced air, splinters sing in your ears, the earth is in constant tremble with the violence of the discharge; you feel it pulsate against your cheek pressed to the moist mud of the parapet, and then a bullet saps the life-blood of the comrade whose elbow has touched yours day and night for forty hours. There is a limit to human endurance in these straits.

There was a lull, and the Foreigner peeped over the parapet which sheltered

him, and communed with himself. Here he was, like Uriah of the Holy Writ, in the forefront of the battle. What had he seen? What could he see? He peered through the stalks of the millet. Ten yards from the trench the crops had been cut—the fallen plants showing that necessity, not season, had caused their downfall. Beyond the cut millet, 800 yards away, was a gentle turf rise. Then a sky-line. That was all, if he excepted the entanglement at the foot of the rise. This could not escape his view, for the barbed wires were hung like a butcher's shop with forms that had once been men. The firing recommenced. Surely he would have done better not to have accepted his friend's hospitality, and to have remained upon an eminence in the rear with the staff. There was a shrill burst of laughter at his side; a wretched soldier had been shot through the brain, and his comrades gave vent to their overstrained feelings in hideous mocking merri-

ment at the contortions which a shocked nerve-system forced from the lifeless limbs.

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Day was just breaking. Kamimoto took the Foreigner by the shoulder and woke him up. "There is some food now; you had better take something, for who shall say when we may move again or find food." It would have been hard to recognise in Kamimoto, as he now stood, the Cambridge undergraduate of a few years ago. He was still mild in manner, but his cheeks were drawn and sunken with privation and sleeplessness; his uniform—he was a *chef-de-bataillon* now, where he had been a company commander three days ago—was torn, dirty, and weather-stained. A dull brown patch above his belt showed where a bullet that travelled round his ribs had bled him. The toes of his boots and the knees of his overalls were worn through by the rough scarps of the hill-sides; even the scabbard of his two-handed sword, the blade of

which had been wielded by Kamimotos of his house for six hundred years, was scarred and friction-marked. Yet withal, save for his eyes, he was mild and even feminine in appearance.

The Foreigner sat up and partook of the sodden rice that served this little residue of a battalion for food. They were still among the corn-stalks, but in a very different place to that in which the Foreigner had received his baptism in Russian fire. Since that day he had seen Kamimoto lead five forlorn-hopes that had failed. He had seen half the battalion blotted out amid the entanglements, and had followed the remaining half over the Russian breast-works, and on, on into the plain, to the little rise upon which they now lay. They had reached it in time to throw up the sketchy trenches, in which the Foreigner, dead-beat, had cast himself down to snatch a moment's sleep.

"Eat, and pray your gods that you may

never see the like of this again. Think of death in thousands, and wish for peace, pray for peace, work for peace!" And the little officer mixed some tepid green tea with his rice, as is the custom of his country. The Foreigner had no comment to make. He had seen his fill of death, of suffering, and human tribulation during the past three days.

A man hurried back from the sentry-line, and shooting a suspicious look at the Foreigner, whispered in his commander's ear. He repeated his story twice, and with a smile and apology Kamimoto left his European friend and dived into the corn-stalks in the direction of the outpost-line.

The Foreigner continued his meal, and then, expert that he was, little evidences around him could not fail to warn that something unusual was happening. The *sous-officiers* went round and awakened such men as were sleeping. These jumped up, clutched their rifles, and disappeared

into the cover to the north. Others came back for ammunition-bags, and a support came up from the rear. Unable to resist that magnetism which takes men into danger zones, even against their better judgment and often their design, the Foreigner also dived into the corn-stalks. Thirty yards and he had reached a firing-line. It was lying down,—a glance told the expert it was endeavouring to make itself as invisible as possible,—each man was in the posture of a hunter who feels that perhaps he is too near to the wind to successfully stalk a timid quarry. The Foreigner threw himself into the line, and then wriggling forwards saw what the men saw.

The little rise commanded a funnel-shaped depression through which the Liao-yang road struggled. It was a poor road, but on either side of it the corn had been pulled and cast by ruthless hands into the rut-morass to make the

going firmer. For half a mile it was possible to trace the roadway as it wound along the base of this little amphitheatre, then it was lost in the standing millet. Along this track a weary column was plodding. The Foreigner looked, and rubbed his eyes. It was a Russian column. There was no misinterpreting the white tunics and blue breeches, no mistaking the figures which loomed colossal in comparison with the little fellows with whom he lay. A counter-attack? His trained eye told him that the dejected movement of the draggled column savoured not of aggression. The men's rifles were across their backs and their pale worn faces were whiter than their blouses. There was no speech, no sound other than the squelching of their boots in the mire. A surrender? No man came forward to arrange quarter for men too tired, too whipped and beaten, to defend themselves. No Japanese went forward to recommend to them such mercy

as they had earned. A misdirected column? That was it.

The thought just flashed through the Foreigner's brain, when the voice of the *chef-de-bataillon* rose superior to the silence. The rifles crashed like one. The Russian column stopped dead in its tracks. The leading fours were so close that the Foreigner could see the look of amazement, horror, and despair upon the blanched features of the wretched men. Then as the magazines ground out their leaden avalanche, the leading fours tried to surge backwards, tried to save themselves in flight. It was awful!—the rifles made no smoke to hide the hideous spectacle; it was like the execution of a bound man. Flight was impossible, for the magnitude of the confusion prevented retreat or retaliation. The little Japanese, shouting and jeering, were now upon their feet and redoubling the rapidity of their fire. With blanched cheek and set teeth the Foreigner watched

"Like a pack of hounds his men streamed down after him."

this terrific curtain to the bloody drama in which he had participated. He saw the white tunics melting into the mud like snow under a sleet shower. He saw a mad rush towards the cornstalks baulked by the intensity of the fire. He saw such of the Russians as remained upon their feet throw their arms into the air and stretch out their naked hands towards the rifles that were annihilating them. Their shrieks were in his ears. Then as if by magic the firing stopped. A little figure—he knew it well, the whole battalion knew it—leaped in front of the firing. For a moment the face was turned towards the Foreigner. The mildness, the culture, the charm were gone: animal ferocity alone remained. It was Kamimoto as he would have been a hundred years ago. His two-handed sword was bare in his hand. He raised it gleaming above his head and dashed down into the amphitheatre. Like a pack of hounds his men streamed down after him. The Foreigner

covered his face with his hands. The end was too terrible. He turned and fled back to the trench. Here he collected his raincoat and water-bottle, and then, with the horrible picture ever before him, went south to collect his thoughts.

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The Foreigner was still lost. Fighting had prevented him from rejoining after witnessing the untoward end of the Russian battalion. He found food and lodging for the night with some Buddhist monks, and at daybreak on the following morning, now that the enemy had completely evacuated it, climbed to the nearest position. A Japanese fatigue-party was toiling,—carrying the corpses of their comrades up the slopes. At the top stood Kamimoto. The same old smile, the same pleasant, mild, and friendly Kamimoto. He greeted the Foreigner warmly; but no reference was made between the two to the yesterday.

His men were carrying corpses up the hill and throwing them into the enemy's trench to mingle with the Russian dead.

"Would it not have been simpler to have burned or buried them at the foot of the rise?" the Foreigner asked in all simplicity.

"Of course; but you must remember that at ten o'clock their excellencies the honourable foreign attachés will come round to see the positions which our infantry won with the bayonet. Therefore, most honourable Foreigner, it were better that you went back to your camp. It would not please any of the staff to know that you had already been here. It is very unfortunate that one so humble as myself should have to request your honourable good self to remove!"

There was a merry twinkle in Kamimoto's eye. But he was expecting an officer from the staff immediately. The

Foreigner made his way down the hillside deep in thought. The speculation uppermost in his mind was whether Kamimoto would have the first field-dressings taken off those corpses.

X.

THE FALL OF THE MIGHTY.

TSIN-TAU, *September.*

THE flag-lieutenant leaned wearily on the rail. It would have been difficult to adequately analyse his thoughts. They were conjured up by the weariness of life which possessed his body, and the fierce despair and utter humiliation which had crushed his soul. The rim of the beam from the search-light on Golden Hill, as it was lighting the water-way for the passage of the last of the battleships, flooded the superstructure of the flagship as she rode at anchor. Yet it was more than the intensity of the unnatural light that blanched the faces of the little group of officers on the bridge. It was not fear,—Russians are

not cowards: besides, the officers of the Russian Pacific Squadron were past fear. It was the utter hopelessness which knowledge of physical incompetency breeds in the vicinity of death. The crestfallen consciousness of impotency that might be seen in the face of an inexpert motorist if the *chauffeur* suddenly had fainted; but not what one would have anticipated in the faces of men to whom a great nation still looked for the successful shaping of its destinies.

It was a weird scene. Three great white beams of light pierced a background that was otherwise impenetrable in its inky blackness. They focussed their concentration upón one point, and illuminated with dazzling contrasts the gaunt hull and heavy tops of a battleship in their every detail, as with laborious toil it was towed between the artificial sags, — legacies of Japanese efforts to obstruct the fairway. In front of it three launches were dragging a mine-

trawl. The busy panting of the tugs and the swirl of the water beneath the trawl-hawser were the only sounds in the vicinity. But other noises punctuated the stillness of the night,—there was ever present the dull reverberation of the Japanese shells from the investing lines, as they burst with maddening monotony on the hill-crests of the outer defences.

Just for a moment the rim of the beam had rested on the flagship, then its focus was readjusted, and all was darkness, except where the moving vessel glided past, conjuring up the vision of some spectre craft in a grim stage setting. It glided past until it was two cables' length distant from the flagship. Then three or four short sharp orders in a deep voice. One tug at least seemed to redouble its panting, and the jarring rattle of metal links told that the warship was anchoring. Almost immediately a light was shown from a casemate on the main-deck of the flagship, and as if by

magic the beams of the search-lights disappeared.

The flag-captain who was standing by the Admiral called the flag-lieutenant by name. Only the first half of the difficulties were over. The lesser had been accomplished, but the greater was to come. The flag-lieutenant took his orders, and moved lethargically down the ladder. A launch was piped to the gangway, and in two minutes he was on his way to give directions to the trawlers. They would now be required to cover the advance of the squadron as it felt its way to the open sea. What were the risks of the home waters in comparison to the open sea! Presently the flash-lights burst up again. Now the reflectors threw the faltering beams well out to sea. It was essential that the adventurous squadron might lie unseen in the shadow of complementary darkness. The lights now traversed as in normal circumstances, lest the reconnoitring torpedo craft

from the blockading squadron should become suspicious. As soon as the trawlers were in position the flag-ship showed a stern light, and the sound of her windlass conveyed to the squadron the order for the momentous movement.

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Daylight, and a thick haze. Thank Providence for the haze. Might it hold until they made the Shantung promontory! The flag-lieutenant was still leaning over the bridge-rail. You could now see his features clearly. The estimate formed in the fierce beam of the search-light had not been unjust. He was a tall spare youth, fined down now below his normal standard by the distressing tension of adverse war. His aristocratic features were drawn and pinched. His auburn beard was touzled and unkempt in its niggard growth; great dark rings encircled his blue eyes. His uniform was in keeping with his features. His duck trousers suggested rather the engineer on

watch than the staff officer on the bridge. Yet in his state he was in sympathy with the crew lying wearily at their stations. Few were sleeping. The Pacific squadron, from Admiral to coal-trimmer, was in no mood for sleep that morning. Thank Providence only for the mist!

The squadron crept on—the battleships in line ahead, the cruisers following in similar formation. The sea was smooth: it usually is so when the land mists lie, but in the fleecy cloud scud and heaving swell there were evidences of approaching wind. Presently a torpedo-boat appeared ahead. It was steaming at its utmost speed, as the great wave breaking over its whale-back showed. A desperate Jap? No; only a report from the line of scouts ahead. The flags were fluttering from the tiny mast. The mist rendered the bunting indistinct. But in a minute the scout was abreast, and the megaphone told the story: "A division of Japanese torpedo-

boats, an exchange of shots, and the escape of the hostile boats"!

The Admiral bit his lip. It was not unexpected, but he had hoped that the mist might have shielded him longer. The gamble was over now: he must turn back immediately, or stand on to fight. The torpedo lieutenant was at his elbow, with a long thin strip of paper in his hand. He had come from the wireless chamber, and the paper was what the machine had recorded. It was a jumble of dots and dashes. The message was Japanese. It did not matter that it was in cipher; the Admiral could read the history the tape related as clearly as if it had been in his own language. It meant that the Japanese patrol-boats had made his movement out. That they had raced to the guardship with the news, and that the guardship was now transmitting it, as fast as the wireless spark could make it, to the Japanese fleet lying under steam in the Elliott Group.

It meant that the Russian fleet must turn back now, or stand on to fight. The Admiral looked over the head of the torpedo lieutenant and gazed out to sea. The mist was disappearing. A south-westerly breeze was rolling it up into the Manchurian coast. The Admiral bit his lip, but no sign on his wan pale face gave evidence of the struggle that was throbbing in his mind. He turned and looked down the line of battleships of his command. One, two, three, four, five! His decision was made in that moment. He would stand on: steer for the Korean Straits if he could; fight if he must!

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The mist had lifted, and the sun shone brightly overhead. The swell just moved to the temper of the freshening breeze, and the yellow sea for once was blue. The Russian flagship stood on her course. She was stately, though weather-stained; but in her stripped decks and towering super-

structure she showed nothing of the battle scars which distinguished the lean-hulled cruiser flag-ship now abreast on the starboard beam. The flag-ship was fresh from the dockyard, while the cruisers had borne the brunt of six months' war. The Admiral was manœuvring a fleet for the first time in his life. How soon would he be manœuvring it in the presence of the enemy!

The answer came almost at once. The navigating officer reported Encounter Rock on the port bow; at the same moment the officer in the foretop shouted down that he could make out a heavy cloud of smoke rising above the silver belt of mist which still clung to the north-eastern horizon. It might or it might not be the torpedo craft, who since daylight had been as tenacious to the movements of the squadron as pilot-fish. Every glass was turned in the direction indicated—every glass with the exception of the Admiral's: he stood

against the rail with his hands clasping the metal bar behind him. Only the yeoman of the signals, with the slack of the halyards across his palm, could see that the long pale fingers were convulsively closing and opening their hold. To the rest of the little group on the bridge the Admiral's pale impassive features conveyed no inkling of the fearful anxiety that was battling in his mind. The great engines ground on below, making their sixteen knots, and each revolution seemed to smite the Admiral as he awaited the verdict of the watchers.

The mystery of the smoke was not long in discovering itself. The breeze was still chasing the mist northwards, and the masts and tops of Togo's battle squadron separated quickly from the silver fog. Six vessels steaming line ahead were responsible for the suspicious smoke; and then the flag-captain reported deliberately, "There is another squadron north-west of

them, steering a course nearer to us." Was it a spasm in the engines, or was it a shudder that seemed to strike every man on the bridge, and almost simultaneously communicate itself to figures in dirty duck on the decks below? What made so many ashen faces turn towards the bridge?

"Six—no, there are only five!"

"Perhaps it is the British from Wei-hai-wei—the silhouette of their ships is very similar," was laconically suggested by the flag-lieutenant, with the faintest suspicion of optimism in his voice.

"Japanese battleships!" A monotonous voice from the top killed this last hope.

Mikasa, Shikishima, Fuji, Asahi, and *Nisshin* in line ahead!" droned the flag-captain as the Japanese squadron became "hull up," showing the white "bones" in front of each.

To fight was now imperative. In a moment the bridge resounded with the strident voice of the Admiral. The leth-

argy vanished, the flag-lieutenant dropped down the ladder, and the decks thrilled with the bugle note. Even before the signal flags had left the yeoman's hand, the squadron had passed the bugle-call along. To fight was now imperative—why, imperative! it had already begun; the rattle of the *Novik's* quickfirers rolled across the summer sea; she was engaging the more enterprising of Togo's scouts. Back the little boats steamed to shelter under the guns of the battle squadron.

The Russians would fight—the battle flags were bent!

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The great ship quivered—then quivered again. For a moment the flag-lieutenant thought that a torpedo had struck her. His nervous system remembered that first torpedo under Golden Hill. It was only the twelve-inch guns. But they made the conning-tower rock. The Japanese had manœuvred, and were now standing in on

the starboard beam. The Russian Admiral changed his course. Great projectiles were ricochetting overhead and raising geysers of salt spray all round them. But for the present the flag-ship could answer shot for shot, and one of the hostile battleships — the *Shikishima* it looked like — had drawn out of the fighting line.

The Admiral clenched the hand-rail. His face was still pale, but the fighting-light was in his eyes. For a moment his gaze turned from the *Mikasa*, with her black hull flashing lurid yellow up and down its lean length. The mist was up again in the south-west, and the sea was rapidly getting up.

"Make the fleet signal, 'Close up—follow me.'" Then he turned to the officer at the navigating tube, "For the promontory."

At the same moment there was a deafening report, and the vessel swung so that

every one in the conning-tower was thrown against the walls.

"What was that—mined?"

The dread of mine and torpedo by this time was firmly ingrained in every Russian sailor, and as the flag-lieutenant sprang down the ladder the horrible nightmare of the *Petropavlovsk* leaped up before his mental vision. It was nothing. A deck officer, who seemed as unconcerned as if he were at manœuvres, came hurrying forward. He reported that a large shell had hit the after 12-inch turret, glanced, and in bursting wrecked the top above.

"Awful! Poor fellows' flesh came down with the splinters on the deck like confetti in a carnival!" The cold-blooded simile passed in the heat of the surroundings. Then the vessel staggered from two terrific blows forward. The flag-lieutenant stumbled ahead, drawing his hands mechanically to his ears, while the torn fragments of iron and splinter soughed past

him. Biting, stinging smoke blinded him, while the force of the concussion flattened him against a ventilator. The first sight he saw was the mangled frame of his comrade. The top of the poor wretch's head was gone, a half-burned cigarette was still between the clenched teeth. He threw his glance upwards — the forward smoke-stack was rent from top to bottom, and the flame and smoke were licking round its base. The 12-inch guns in the forward battery solemnly fired, and the ear-splitting crack of the discharge brought the youth to his senses. He made for the ladder. Great God! the conning-tower and forward bridge were but torn, smoking, and twisted wreck. A man jumped to the deck. His face was as black as an Ethiopian's, his uniform and beard torn and discoloured to a filthy yellow; his left arm, severed at the biceps, was dangling by a sinew.

"All are killed, the Admiral, all!" the

figure gasped, as it reeled and sank fainting to the deck.

Then the port guns fired. The flag-lieutenant realised that the ship was not steering — she was veering round. He dashed to the after bridge, past the quick-firer crews lying prostrate, amid the wreckage and the corpses. He found the commander superintending the shipping of the after steering-gear, and reported the paralysing intelligence. For a moment the commander looked at him blankly. He was bleeding from a skin wound in the neck, and such of his uniform not stained yellow was scarlet with blood.

"Good!" he ejaculated; "she is steering again. Full steam ahead. Make a fleet signal. Make the signal, 'The Admiral transfers the command.'"

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Thank Providence for that south-westerly gale. The flag-ship at sixteen knots came into the bright bay that faces

the Ostend of the Far East. For the last time during the war the 12-pounder crews were mustered. What a relief. Mustered in peace to salute the German flag.

XI.

CHAMPIONS.

YINKOW, *October.*

THE moment of deadlock had arrived. The Russian counter-attack, desperate though it had been, had failed to get home; but the Japanese infantry, immovable itself, was unable to turn the mass of Russians from behind the fold in the ground which they had reached. Barely three hundred paces separated the muzzles of these opposing lines of blackened rifles. But that narrow green strip was impassable to both. To show upon it was to court almost certain death. Already the turf was littered with fallen men, and scarred and seared with the violence of plunging shell. But the artillery fire from both sides had now ceased,

since from the gun positions it was impossible to discriminate between friend and foe.

Lieutenant Tokugawa, of the —st Regiment of Imperial Japanese Infantry, lay amongst his men, with his eyes fixed upon a slight mound midway between the firing lines. The five stones which served him as head-cover gave him a scant loop-hole. The little mound attracted him. It was little more than a fairy ring—perhaps it was some Manchu's grave; but it fascinated Tokugawa, and he made a mental measure of its distance. He was calculating if it should be the limit of the next rush when it was ordered. Tokugawa was a little man. But though his stature was small in the matter of cubits, his back was that of an athlete. He had the reputation of being the bravest and strongest man in the regiment, where all were brave and strong.

That mound — innocent little heap of

emerald green—was exercising its fascination upon another soldier. Two of the most sanguinary rushes made before the Russian counterstroke finally failed had been led by a tall fair subaltern and a long-haired priest. Twice had these two placed themselves in front of a group of desperate men and striven to win their way to the Japanese bayonets, and twice had rifle fire obliterated the attempt, leaving but a handful to regain the shelter of the dip.

The fair subaltern's eye had caught the mound. It marked the possible place for a pause, and, setting his teeth, he marshalled his shattered sections for a last despairing effort. The afternoon sun caught the glint of the tapering bayonets as the obedient *moujiks* rose to their feet. A clatter of rifles brought into position passed down the Japanese firing-line as the watchful little eyes accepted the warning. Up rose the youthful subaltern and priest,

"Two of the most sanguinary rushes made before the Russian counterstroke finally failed."

with perhaps twenty men behind them. One withering volley, and the attempt had failed almost before it had begun. The subaltern, the priest, and four others alone stood, and came racing for the mound. Other rifles spoke. One by one the men staggered and collapsed. Now only the priest and officer remain. A few more steps and the scant haven will be reached. The priest, with his lank locks waving in the air, his crucifix aloft, sinks to earth as his legs become nerveless beneath him. Yet, though he is fast becoming spent, he holds the emblem above him. But the youth! Tokugawa can now see his fair yet firm-set features, can almost feel the flash from his blue eyes. The mud-spirts of striking bullets seem to entangle him; yet on he still comes. His life is surely charmed by that crucifix still held aloft with faltering strength in that taloned hand. A moment more and—— he is down behind the cover! The mound

top is scarred and rent with striking nickel. The crucifix is shattered with the hand that held it, as the priest collapses to a dozen wounds. A sleet of bullets sweeps the narrow margin, and then all is still again.

A fierce light burns in Tokugawa's eyes. He is unwinding the thong from his two-handed sword,—the sword which his father wielded in the Rebellion—which his forbears in the direct line had wielded in a thousand fights for half as many years. His resolution once taken, nothing could shake it. The fascination of the mound was now changed to magnetism. He is on his feet—the true steel is bare in his hands, and he is racing for the mound. A shout goes up, a cheer in which both sides join. The tall fair subaltern has jumped to his feet. The best blade in Tsarskoe Selo is bare in his hand—he has accepted the challenge, and he stands with head erect at the base of the mound awaiting

the onrush of his diminutive adversary. As if by instinct the battle in the vicinity accepts the trial by champion, and both sides rest on their arms, even expose themselves freely by rising to their knees.

The moment is supreme. The bright sunlight: the green, with its groups of fallen men, the lesser wounded raising themselves painfully to watch the coming issue: the war-bedraggled spectators shooting up as it were from the ground: the two main figures with a bright star of light on the ground behind them, as a sun-ray catches the shattered crucifix. Ten paces from the mound Tokugawa halts to catch his breath, for he has raced a hundred yards. The tall Russian lowers his guard, and bows slightly. He will take no mean advantage. The little Japanese is quick to detect the courtesy implied, and, not to be outdone, instinctively inclines his head. Then, remembering he is a soldier, he brings his bright blade to "the recover."

The Russian salutes likewise, and then they close in mortal combat.

The Russian is the swordsman—Tokugawa the energetic and vigilant assailant. The blades flash high and low for a moment; the clash of the steel is audible to both fighting lines, in spite of the din of battle raging with unceasing vigour all around them. Then a murmur goes up from the onlookers, a blade has been flung clear of the *mêlée*, and falls—falls beside the crucifix. A shout from the Japanese —*Banzai! banzai! banzai!* It is the Russian who is disarmed. Whether snapped, or shorn by the superior steel, his blade has gone; he stands with nothing but the hilt in his hand. *Banzai!*

The end has come, and the Russian onlookers fiercely grip their pieces. The subaltern springs back, and then hurling the remnant of his faithless weapon at his adversary's face, he closes upon him with his naked hands. The missile misses, and

Tokugawa, with the agility of a squirrel, leaps sideways—the two-handed sword of his fathers is raised to strike—the end has come, and the rifles quiver in the onlookers' hands. But no—the blow never falls: with a side-sweep, which was the stoutest and noblest stroke that ever swordsman struck, Tokugawa flings his weapon from him—twenty yards away it falls—and then man to man with naked hands the champions close. Fair-haired giant and swarthy pigmy. It is all over in a few seconds. By some occult leverage—some subtle science, in which mind triumphs over muscle—Tokugawa flings his great opponent to the ground, and kneels upon his chest. Again the cheer rings out. The Russians even join issue, for the magnanimity of the sword has not escaped them.

Tokugawa jumps clear, and, extending his hand, helps the Russian to his feet. For a moment the two men stand with

hands clasped, looking into each other's eyes. Though they cannot speak each other's tongue, yet they read there that which no known language can express. The Russian stoops and picks something from the ground. It is the shattered crucifix: he places it in his late opponent's hand. Tokugawa tugs at the little chain at his breast. The link gives, and he passes to the Russian officer his seal and signet. Again the two men grasp hands, and then they salute and turn. The cheer rises afresh as they stride back to their respective lines. No finger touches trigger until both, after a farewell wave, are back to cover again. A moment's pause. The Japanese reinforcements have arrived. A heavy fire, a shout, and the mass of Japanese advance and drive the Russians from the field.

XII.

THE OUTPOST.

If you turn up a North China sailing directory you will find that the west coast of Korea is recommended to mariners with a note of warning. It is an iron-bound seaboard, and the northern portion of it, which hitherto has remained uncharted in the Admiralty records, for three months in winter is ice-bound. The coast from Yong-ampo to Fusan is fringed with a succession of rugged cliff-bound islets. Hundreds of pinnacled rocks and masses of cliff, apparently of no value to living creatures other than sea-birds. In winter a bleak, dreary, dangerous coast-line indeed. In summer, when the Yellow Sea is tranquil, the islands are of no import from their very barrenness

and inaccessibility. The reader will speculate what history, except of shipwreck, can be fathered upon a region so desolate and uninteresting. Of shipwreck, as it is brought to mind by a rockbound coast, we have no concern; but some of these inaccessible and unheard-of rocks for a brief period in the early months of the war were the means by which the great palpitating world heard the legends of sea disasters more ghastly than simple shipwrecks.

Two men sat crouching over a charcoal fire in the worst apology for a hut that imagination could conceive. Half cave, a quarter tent, and the remainder sods and board, it furnished the poorest shelter from the semi-blizzard that was raging outside. The men, in spite of the goatskin coats in which they were clad, seemed half perished with cold. They cowered over the brass pot that held their fire, and raked the embers together to increase the miserable heat. And well they might

cower, for the whole ramshackle erection swayed and rattled with the wind, while the driven sleet, bitter and searching, made its way through the many crevices in roof and wall. Outside a very tumult raged,—the wind howled and shrieked all round the dwelling, the ceaseless thunder of breaking waves showed that these two miserables were living on the brink of some sea-washed cliff, while the brief intervals and lulls in the grinding storm were filled with the plaintive moan of wind-vibrating wires and stays. A glance round the hovel, and a stranger would have been stupefied. The light was good and bright—well it might be, for it was electric. Electricity in such a dwelling! And look on the shelves against the wall. Instruments—instruments the most modern and delicate that science could manufacture.

A bell rang,—electric too,—and presently a wheel began to click, slowly but deliberately. If you had closed your eyes you

could have imagined that you were in your club listening to the mechanism that gives you the latest quotation from the Bourse. Slowly the instrument ticked. Both men listened, nodding out the dots and dashes as they read them. Then one of them jumped to his feet.

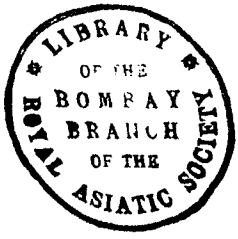
"That is it—that is our own—not the honourable Russian."

His companion rose and joined him, and together they pored over the long strip of paper as the symbols were ticked off on it at the rate of ten to fifteen words a minute. All the men could tell was that it was their own cipher. Above that they had no knowledge, beyond the fact that as soon as they received the final group the message was to be transmitted farther. For half an hour the machine ticked on monotonously, and then the message ended. One of the men pulled an old oil-papered umbrella out of the corner, opened the creaking door, and dived into the blizzard

without. He was responsible for the oil-engine. His comrade filled a long-stemmed pipe with a bowl just about the size of a girl's thimble. He picked up a glowing coal with the primitive fire-tongs. In three whiffs his smoke was done, and, turning to the shelf again, he switched on the current and touched the key. With a smack like a bullet flattening against a wall the great spark cracked out, filling the room with a white-blue glare. And, long and short, short and long, in the midst of its spluttering noise the message went.

Over sixty miles across that stormy sea had it come. It was now going seventy miles through space to the receiving-station at Togo's *rendezvous.* In two hours the Admiralty in Tokio would know how two destroyers had steamed into the roadstead at Port Arthur and disabled another Russian battleship. And when this story was given to the public, the two human instruments who had made its amazing passage

possible, perched on the spur of the far-off Korean rock in all ignorance of the news themselves, would probably be sitting over their charcoal fire, talking of their beautiful Japan, and comparing it with the poverty of their time-being surroundings.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XIII.

THE BLOCKADE-RUNNER.

TIENT-SIN, *November.*

THE autumn sun was just sinking in a bank of haze through which it peered, a murky globule of tarnished rose, when the skipper of the *George Washington* changed his course to make the Chefoo headland. The fog which hung heavily to the north-west had beaten the breeze. There was not a ripple on the oily surface of the Yellow Sea; and the countless fingers radiating from the Chefoo light heralded a real thick Pechili night. The skipper of the *George Washington*, a rough ill-hewn Norwegian, came up from the chart-house, and, thrusting his great hairy hands deep into his coarse duck pockets,

stepped the bridge pace for pace with his "hard case" mate, and talked gruffly of the sweets of the Karl Frederick's bar in Tsin-tau, their last port of call. Behind them the Malay quartermaster at the wheel blinked stolidly.

There is no worry about pilots in Chefoo's open roadstead; and once the skipper had made the headland, he just tucked the *George Washington* in behind a Butterfield & Swire's packet, and followed her stern light. His eye caught the great cloud of black smoke which, also beaten by the mist, trailed heavily behind the coaster. Then he glanced quickly up at his own smoke-stack. A similar deadweight of burnt Japanese coal hung in motionless cloud behind them. The Norwegian stopped and said curtly to the mate, "Tell the engineer I want to see him."

In five minutes a little wizened figure stood at the skipper's elbow. A grimy

finger touched the greasy pilot-cap which was pulled well down over a pair of ferret eyes.

"You wanted me, sir?"

"Yes, Higgin. Have you got that 'Welsh' trimmed?"

The little ferrety eyes gave a knowing signal as the dilapidated machinist made answer, "Rather: the Japanese on top will just take us in." The gnarled mate, returned from his errand, had walked over to the rail, and as he stared at the lights now beginning to twinkle on Chefoo Bluff, was making a mental calculation as to how much two thousand Mexican dollars a-month would work out per diem. At last it struck him that the sun had sunk low enough for their purpose, and he sent a deck hand to take in the sun-bleached ensign from astern.

They were now up amongst the war-ships. The skipper took them astern of the *Hai-shen*, then inside the Austrians.

As they passed the *Vicksburg* and the American tender, the Chinese bos'un and winchmen clambered on to the forecastle, where the mate joined them. They were right under the Bluff now, with its countless lights dancing across the harbour-swell. The whirr of a windlass told them that the Butterfield & Swire boat had let go her anchor. The skipper brought the *George Washington* in between her and a China Merchant, and dropped his hook.

In ten minutes the Chinese Maritime Customs' boat was alongside, and the little white-haired "runner" satisfied that the *George Washington* was carrying a cargo of Moji coal to Tsin-wan-tau, and had put into Chefoo to take water and the 100 tons of Chinese cargo consigned to the treaty port of Newchwang. Having settled his business with the port authorities, the skipper changed his duck suiting for a presentable suit of serge. Handing the

ship over to the mate, he selected a *sanpan* from the cluster of hopeful boatmen swarming round the ladder, and went shorewards with his mind full of thoughts of a Beach Hotel dinner.

The *sanpan* brought up at the sea-wall, and the skipper, throwing a twenty-cent piece into the bottom of the boat, climbed up the steps. A throng of lazy Chinamen was crowding the *bund*. It made way for the burly European as he shaped his course for the town. Just as he reached the cable office an exceptionally dirty coolie ran up to him and saluted with a half-naval, half-civilian tug at his ancient cloth-cap.

"Alright, master, Mr Balleyhew Beach Hotel have got!"

The skipper shook his head, and answered, "All right, Wong;" while the Chinaman slunk away much as a ricksha-coolie would on his solicitations being rebuffed. The skipper walked directly to the hotel and

turned into the bar entrance. A couple of coasting-masters were standing at the counter, and they both greeted the Norwegian, "Hullo, Jorgessen; we heard that they had sent you to Siberia to do a little hard labour."

"How did you manage to get clear of Vladivostock? Have a Scotch!"

The skipper joined his colleagues, helping himself from the bottle they pushed towards him before he made answer.

"I've been away some time. They talked much about the old hooker; but they let her go. There's pretty rough times in the coast-trade now."

"What have you got now?"

"*George Washington*, an old tank chartered to carry coal for the Pechili Mining Company."

"I know her," said one of the masters, flicking the ash from his cigar; "converted Holt boat. Rather fast boat for the coal-trade, not, Jorgessen?"

The skipper shrugged his shoulders, stood the men a further potion, and then excused himself and withdrew into the hotel. He sauntered into the entrance-hall, ordered the boy to keep him a place at dinner, and then scanned the visitors' list. Finding the number of the room he required, he spent two dollars in playing with an automatic gambling-machine before disappearing up the residential passage. Having ascertained the right room, he knocked sharply at the door and entered. A fair, almost boyish, young Englishman rose to meet him.

"Well, Jorgessen, how are your nerves? you have a fine night."

The dour Norwegian smiled sardonically as he answered, "The promise of such a night has prompted me to come earlier than I intended: but I would have preferred a gale of wind!"

"Why did you come in here at all?" queried the youth.

"Because we heard that they were watching off Shantung for direct sailings to ports in the Gulf of Pechili. This spell of fair weather necessitates caution. As it was, we were signalled by the *Chiyoda* yesterday: if we had been bound for any port but Chefoo, she would probably have overhauled us, and we didn't want that. Also, I would like to see the colour of the money. Half down, I think!"

The Englishman moved across the room to the writing-table, unlocked a despatch-box, and, lifting the lid, took out a bundle of crisp notes. The wad was a couple of inches thick.

"How much was it?" the youth said as he wetted his thumb.

"Fifteen thousand roubles!"

"Fifteen thousand roubles it is!" and he counted out thirty of the notes. "Wouldn't you like me to keep them for you? I wouldn't advise you to take them with you."

"I wish to take them," the skipper answered almost sullenly. "I know what to do with them," and he thrust the packet into his hip-pocket.

"When will you sail?" and the Englishman returned the balance to the despatch-box, turning the key.

"As soon as the Chinese rubbish is on board: I suppose you sent the lighters off?"

"Yes; they are alongside now."

"And my papers?"

"Will be on board by ten o'clock: it's lucky we haven't to deal with the British consul!"

"Well, good-bye then," and the Norwegian crushed the youth's slim hand in his massive paw.

"Good-bye, and may fortune be with you! When shall we expect you back in Chefoo?"

"That depends on the weather and the —Japanese!"

The skipper slammed the door behind him and shambled into the dining-room. He sat down to his dinner with 15,000 roubles in his pocket as unconcernedly as if he had just received his monthly pay of fifteen pounds.

. . . . . .

The two coasting masters, after their shore revel, were returning to their respective ships about midnight. As the *sanpan* took them under the stern of the Butterfield & Swire boat, which was still taking cargo, one of them remarked—

"Hello, old Jorgessen's tank has pulled out. Old surly Jorg didn't look as if he was in such a 'continental' hurry. Wonder what the glass says: the old boy knows this condemned harbour,—'spose he's gone to another anchorage."

"He'll consider himself d—d lucky if he casts his hook where he hopes to by sun up to-morrow, or my name's not Thompson.

He'll be steaming with doused lights the night, or I'm a Dutchman!"

"What! a dash for Port Arthur! It's a fine thick night for it."

"Well, the Pechili Company don't usually ferry coals in sixteen-knot hookers."

The sound of the Butterfield & Swire winches drowned further conversation. . . .

The master of the coaster had been wrong in his supposition about the lights. When he gave it as his opinion that the *George Washington* was steaming for Port Arthur with "doused lights," she was steering for the Howki light with all the outward appearance of an honest trader. But a look round her decks would have shown that something unusual was under weigh. After taking in her cargo at Chefoo the derricks had been lowered and housed. Now the winches had been again uncovered and the derricks shipped, and were being swung out over the side, as if in preparation to take in cargo again.

The vessel, too, was slipping through the water at such a pace as told that the engines were under their fullest pressure. The night was as dark as pitch, and the fog so thick that it was with difficulty you saw the lines of the forecastle from the bridge. The skipper stood alone on the bridge with the blinking Malay at the wheel, while the mate busied himself with the preparations of the lifting-gear. This finished, he mustered his Chinese crew, and, opening a locker just abaft the foremast, handed to each an iron belaying-pin.

Finally, he rejoined his chief on the bridge, and for an hour the two paced up and down without exchanging a word. Suddenly a voice from the forecastle reported the Howki light. The skipper and mate went down into the chart-room, and in five minutes the course was set. The skipper returned to the bridge and put the helm over until the ship's head was due north, while the mate whistled the boatswain; and

in five minutes mast-head, stern, and side-lights had been brought in and the lanterns placed, still lighted, in the lamp-room. The ship had become a thing of darkness, ploughing into the midst of darkness. . . .

The *George Washington* was doing her best. The glow at the top of the smoke-stack was all that was visible ten yards from her, except the white phosphorescent race which she churned up with her propeller. The darkness seemed to form up in front of her as some great opaque wall. The mist had gathered rather than dispersed. The mate came back from examining the patent log. It registered 16 knots, point 2. There was a current with her, and the skipper, calculating that she was setting to the east, still held on due north. "That should bring her to her destination in two hours, or pile her on the rocks."

The skipper set his teeth and stamped his sea-boots on the deck, for the fog was wet

and cold. The crew were huddled into one of the deck-houses. The only lights were the carefully screened binnacle and the suspicion of glare from the smoke-stack. In another forty minutes he would have nothing to fear but loose mines and the rocks. The blockade was nearly run, and they had not seen the vestige of a Jap.

What was that? Something seemed to break into the monotonous grind of the throbbing engines. The two officers moved to the port side and leaned far over the rail with eager ears. Nothing; the swish of their own displacement drowned everything. What relief! No; there it is again. It is unmistakable this time—the peculiar pant of a torpedo-boat. The look-outs have got it now, for they too are craning over the rail. Yes; there is a dark body moving parallel with them. The skipper seizes the night-glasses. He need not have worried, for the closed eye of the searchlight is suddenly opened; and though it falters in

its struggle with the fog, yet the blurred beam can cleave the gloom sufficiently for the information of both crews.

"Small torpedo-boat" is the Norwegian skipper's verdict. "Get the lights shipped again, Mr Poole, and look round and see if more swine of her kind are on hand. If there are, we must run for it and trust to providence: if she is alone, well——" and he glanced up at the outline of the derricks.

In the meantime the torpedo-boat was groping with its searchlight to ascertain the nature of the craft she had discovered. In a sea so calm it took her no time to decrease the distance until the searchlight could overpower the fog.

But by this time the *George Washington* had its port-side light again showing. The boat was now close enough to speak. The hail came in English through a megaphone.

"Ship ahoy—What ship is that?"

The skipper put his hands together and

shouted through them "*George Washington*, Norwegian; Shanghai to Tsin-wan-tau."

The Japanese evidently did not hear very well; at least they did not seem to understand, for the megaphone rasped out the peremptory order, "Stop, or we'll sink you!"

The mate was now back on the bridge. The skipper with his hand on the telegraph turned to him inquiringly. Instinctively the mate understood. "It's all right, old man; they are solitary, and everything's ready!" Over went the telegraph's handle. The bell rang back from the engine-room, and the throbbing in the ship's internals ceased.

"Stop her!" shrieked the megaphone.

"She's stopped, you blankety fools!" answered the skipper.

It takes a ship in good trim doing sixteen knots some time to run to a standstill, so the torpedo-boat improved the opportunity, circling round her quarry and scrutinising

her under the beam of its search-light. But the fog was so opaque that at the distance she thought it safe to keep she could have made out but little detail.

The English-speaking expert on the megaphone kept up a running supply of queries. At last he shouted, "Why had you not all your lights?"

"You made that out, did you!" mused the captain, as he shouted back, "Electric lighted ship—dynamo suddenly gave out—had to light oil lights."

"Don't understand—stand by for a rope—am coming alongside."

"Port or starboard?" asked the skipper.

"Port!"

"Thank our lucky stars for this calm," soliloquised the skipper; then, aloud, "Everything ready, Mr Poole?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The torpedo-boat turned round, shut off the search-light, and, reducing her speed, swung down on the *George Washington*. A

few pants from the oscillating engines, the chime of the bell, a slight bump, and the torpedo-boat was alongside. The rope was thrown up and made fast. The first man of the boarding party was swinging himself up by the gangway, when a deep voice from the collier's bridge shouted "Let go!"

Two blows with a hammer, and then with a grinding crash a steel patent anchor with a forty-foot drop tore its way through the deck, fore compartment, and bottom of the torpedo-boat. The resistance might have been tissue paper, for the released steel hawser followed after the anchor. The mate with a single blow of his axe parted the rope holding the torpedo-boat. The skipper telegraphed the engine-room, "Full steam ahead." The Chinese boatswain brained the boarding-officer with his belaying-pin. With a convulsive shudder, as if she were a human being shaking off a reptile, the *George Washington* drew clear of the torpedo-boat. And just in time, for

the rush of water spurting up within the little craft had reached her boilers, and she burst asunder with a report like a blasting charge. Then the black curtain of fog and night closed over all.

"Narrow squeak, Mr Poole," grunted the skipper as the mate joined him on the bridge.

"Dirty business; but it worked famously, sir. What's that ahead?"

"Port Arthur search-lights: if we don't hit a mine, we're through!"

XIV.

THE AFFAIR OF THE BRIDGE-GUARD.

A SMART little Japanese officer, resplendent in the amalgamation of yellow, green, and scarlet which furnishes the uniform of the Guards cavalry, rode up to the portico of the unpretentious building which is the headquarters of the great General Staff in Tokyo. A foreign onlooker would have remarked upon the seat of this little light cavalryman. He sat his horse far better than the majority of cavalry officers to be seen in the capital; also, there was a cut about his tunic and a smartness in his general appearance which were in contrast to what is generally seen in the capital of the Mikado's Empire. There was a reason for this. Lieutenant Zamoto had just re-

turned from the best finishing school in the world for a cavalry officer. He had been associated for the last two years with a Bengal cavalry regiment, and consequently had taken his final polish from the best type of cavalry officer living.

Proud of his profession and imitative to a degree, if he found aught in the possession of others that was worthy of imitation, Zamoto had fashioned himself on all that was best in the atmosphere of three great Continental nations, and he had returned to his home a model of what every cavalry officer of the Guard should be, no matter his race, breeding, or origin.

The little infantry sentry in the portico came hurriedly to "the present," with all the clatter and precision required in a German text-book. As Zamoto dismounted, an orderly dropped down the steps and took his horse from him. Just stopping to brush the dust from his patent-leather boots, Zamoto entered the portal of the Staff

building, the faculty of which, though at the moment in the midst of peace, was working diligently at the machinery which would have made immediate warfare possible. As Zamoto clattered in, the messengers and orderlies stood up in their places. He acknowledged the salutation, as any well-bred Japanese would have done, whether his regiment was Cavalry of the Guard or not, and mounting the stairway went up to the office of the staff-officer who had summoned him.

He opened the door without ceremony, and was welcomed by his brother officer with as much formal courtesy as if he had been a total stranger. A glance round the room declared at once the immeasurable difference between the East and West. The officer whom he was visiting, if his style and title could be accurately translated into English, would possibly have been a D.A.Q.M.G. for intelligence. His office was likewise his

lodging. He had a little cubicle of a room. In one corner was a camp-bed, which bore the evidence of having been slept in on the preceding night. A miniature toilet-stand stood beside it. For the rest, the furniture consisted of two chairs, a table, and an iron-bound chest, the last apparently for the safe-keeping of documents. The office-table, however, was a pattern of neatness. All along its length lay docketed piles of telegrams, and it was evident from the writing materials in front of this D.A.Q.M.G. that his duties lay in the digesting of the contents of each telegram that reached his department. The weather was hot, and consequently the staff-officer had discarded most of his uniform. His red-banded shako was thrown on the bed, his sword hung on a nail from the wall, while his tunic had slipped on to the floor behind him. Zamoto sat down on the one vacant chair, and after the first pleasantry which etiquette required, remarked—

"Well, I received your telegram, and here I am."

The staff-officer looked at him sleepily between his little slits of eyelids: it would have seemed that he took no interest in the question or the visitor, but that sleepy look was penetrating and searching. He was trying to detect in Zamoto's features any sign that might exist of recent debauchery or ill-living likely to prove prejudicial to future soldierly conduct. Doubtless Zamoto knew that he was undergoing this scrutiny. For a moment the two men looked at each other impassively, and then the meaningless smile flickered over the staff-officer's features as he passed to the cavalryman a paper packet of cigarettes.

"Well," said the staff-officer, as he lighted his cigarette from a little ball of live charcoal in the ash-tray at his elbow, "it is not I who wanted to see you. You have been sent for by a higher authority

—he will see you now; come along with me."

Thereupon the staff-officer picked up his coat, shook it, and put it on, readjusted his sword-belt, and led Zamoto through a side-door into the neighbouring room.

An elderly officer, with his shako awry and his tunic all unbuttoned, was sitting cross-legged on a chair. He was leaning over a map and sucking laboriously at a fat cigar. His butcher boots had evidently inconvenienced him, for they had been cast off and were lying under the table; his socks were striped in black and white, and that of the left foot had a big hole in the heel. This was the picture that met Zamoto as he stood stiffly to attention, having brought his heels together with smartness and precision.

"Your Excellency, here is Lieutenant Zamoto."

With this brief introduction the staff-officer withdrew and closed the door be-

hind him. The general inclined his head in acknowledgment of the entrance of his subordinates, and turning round in his chair, took a slip of paper out of a basket on the floor by his side. He gave one brief glance at the subaltern before him, and commenced to read from the paper.

"You will proceed immediately to Yinkow; there you will report yourself to the Japanese consul, who will put you into communication with a certain person in Newchwang; with the instructions of that person you will place yourself in communication with a certain section of the Hunhutzas. It will be your duty to use your knowledge of that part of China to organise certain of these Hun-hutzas after the Japanese system. Of that system you are already aware. You will receive more definite instructions from time to time after you have arrived at Yinkow. You will proceed in a civilian capacity in any guise that you may see fit."

Having finished reading the paper, the little old man tossed it back in the basket, adding—

"Do you understand clearly?"

The subaltern nodded his assent. "Then," continued the general, "understanding your duty, go and perform it well, looking for strength and guidance to the far-reaching power and goodness of our Emperor."

Knowing he was dismissed, Zamoto bowed again, and rejoined the staff-officer in the next room.

. . . . . .

Five Chinamen were lying huddled close together on the raised platform which serves all Manchu households for a bed. In spite of its paper windows and the state of the season outside, the interior of the room was not cold, at least not at the spot where the five men were lying, since it is the custom of these people in winter to maintain a permanent fire in an outhouse, the flue of which passes under the common

bed. Although the only light in the room was from the faint glow of a smoking oil-lamp perched on the end of a rod, yet it was sufficient to show that the house belonged to one of the poorest and dirtiest of Manchu husbandmen. Everything was black and murky with lamp-smoke. Lumps of flesh, which, if it had not been for the intense cold, would long ago have been putrefying, were hanging from the centre joists. Yet it is in hovels like this that one is glad to penetrate when one is caught in a Manchurian windstorm.

The five men appeared to be asleep, for there was no movement noticeable amongst the skins which covered them other than the even rise and fall of human respiration. Presently there was a sound outside. A heavy door moved, and half a dozen sleeping dogs were disturbed into temporary excitement. There were the sounds of a man stamping his feet, and it seemed from the swish of fuel that he was stoking the

fire in the outhouse. Doubtless some belated wayfarer, who, almost frozen by the bitter cold outside, was now warming himself before the grateful embers.

The door of the sleeping apartment opened, and the figure of a sixth Chinaman appeared. He, like his fellows, was clad in skins, and icicles stood out from the fur adjacent to his face. The dim light from the spluttering oil-lamp made the frost upon his garments glisten and sparkle, as if he were covered with stage spangles.

The figure moved over to the five sleeping men, and shook them, one by one, by the foot. Their sleep was evidently that of men who are used to catch such scanty repose as opportunity will allow, for in a moment all five were awake. A few words from the recent comer and they were tightening their belts and taking down arms from the rafters above them.

They were a band of Hun-hutzas, mem-

bers of the fraternity of licensed highwaymen who haunt the valley of the Liau-ho. It was evident that they had some desperate work in hand, for the late-comer imparted his information to each in turn, and the men conversed in whispers. He then went to a brass-bound chest which stood against the household bed and opened the lid. It was full to the brim with barley. Taking off his fur gauntlet, the Hun-hutza plunged his arm into the barley and drew out a metal cylinder. He repeated this operation until he had possessed himself of four similar cylinders: these he secreted in the big inside pouch of his fur robe.

Thus equipped, the six men, leaving the lamp burning, stole out of the room—out through the pent-house, past the growling dogs, into the court beyond, across the courtyard to another building. The stamping of hoofs on the frozen floor indicated that it was a stable.

Six ponies were led out one by one, and then the great iron-bound and quaintly carved door of the courtyard was gingerly opened, and the six men led their horses through into the howling blizzard outside. They girthed up, mounted their unwilling steeds, and in single file rode northwards. For an hour, perhaps, they travelled, constantly beating their arms against their sides to keep the circulation in their extremities.

At the end of an hour they arrived at a little group of trees. Here they halted and dismounted, two of the men remaining with the ponies, while the other four started out across the snow. The blizzards in Manchuria do not drift much snow that lies: it is the wind and the frost that kill on this vast steppe. But by now the fury of the storm had somewhat abated; and as there was no moon, and the recent snow had become slippery, their progress was slow. It was certain that their mission

was one of extreme danger, and necessitated the utmost caution, for the men had cast their firearms loose, and had them ready to hand. It seemed, though it was difficult to see, that they were armed with modern rifles.

Suddenly they halted again, and threw themselves flat on the snow. By the aid of the stars and the white mantle that covered the whole surface of the earth, by straining the eyes it was just possible to make out the outline of some obstacle ahead. It was evidently the objective of this desperate quartette. A well-known sound strikes the ear. There is the pant and fuss of a locomotive breasting an incline. It approaches nearer and nearer, and the four desperadoes lying flat on their stomachs can see the shower of sparks which the wood fuel emits from the funnel. The rise has been mastered, and fifty yards in front of the prostrate men the great train passes, shaking into a better pace as

the last of its long load of waggons arrives above the crest. All is clear now. The four night-birds are train-wreckers working in the interests of the Japanese against the Russian communications.

The train passes, and the red light on the aftermost truck is disappearing in the far distance. Then the four men again begin to worm themselves forward on their stomachs. From time to time they hear the guttural shouts of the Siberian railway guards from an adjacent picket. The night is dark, and they trust to arrive at the line unseen.

After a tedious and wearying half-hour they reach the edge of the cutting by the permanent way. The man with the cylinders has already thrust his hand inside his pouch, and is preparing to draw out the blasting charges. Suddenly there is a shout from behind. Anxiously each of the four turns his head in the direction of the sound. But they are too late, the

recent snow has dulled the sound of the hoofs, and before they can spring up and defend themselves they are at the mercy of a patrol of half a dozen Cossack lancers. To fight is impossible: three of the Hunhutzas throw themselves on their knees and pray for mercy. The fourth, he with the cylinders, makes an effort to cast his rifle loose and defend himself; but the Cossack *sous-officier* sees the movement, and, driving the butt of his lance hard into the wretch's stomach, hurls him breathless to the ground.

. . . . . .

It is a beautiful morning as these severe winter mornings go, and the two Russian officers in charge of the bridge-guard turn out of their snug little bivouac under the embankment to hear the report that the night patrols have captured four train-wreckers red-handed.

"Bring them up," says the tall, fair, fur-covered senior, who is an officer from

the European army, and has been posted to this section of the railway on account of the energy he has displayed in preventing damage to the line by the marauding Hun-hutzas. The four wretched culprits are brought before him. Miserables, their captors had extended to them nothing of the hospitality of mean warmth which they themselves were able to find in the bivouac of the bridge-guard. Miserable indeed, but stoical withal.

The Russian officer, as he lit a cigarette, walked over to the prisoners and peered into the face of the shortest of the four. He took off the fur cap, and laying hold of the queue beneath, gave it a wrench. It came away in his hand.

"Ha, ha! I thought so; it was too daring for those wretched Manchus to have undertaken by themselves." And the tall Russian laughed loudly. The laugh died on his lips as he looked at the Japanese face before him; he changed from his own

tongue to French, looking the while like a man who has seen a ghost.

"My God!" he said, "it must be the same: to think that you should have come to this!"

The masquerading Japanese answered in halting French: "Yes, captain; when we were comrades together in Eure-et-Loire, we never dreamed that it would come to this!"

The Russian steadied himself, and, without saying a word, took out his cigarette-case and handed the Japanese a cigarette. Then he called his servant and ordered some spirits.

"Perhaps you would prefer tea?" he said to his sorry guest; "it is quite ready, only I must apologise that it is Russian tea."

The little Japanese admitted that he would prefer the tea. As he drank it the Russian captain grimly gave some orders

to the escort, and, pulling out his watch, he reverted to French—

"Lieutenant Zamoto, in five minutes you will be shot. It is the only concession I can make to you. Your three companions will be hanged immediately from the bridge-girders. God be with you!"

XV

THE NAVAL SUB-LIEUTENANT'S STORY.

THIS is the sub-lieutenant's story.

He was sitting in one of the best bedrooms in the Beach Hotel. He had pulled his chair as close to the stove as possible, and it seemed that every pore of his emaciated frame was striving to absorb the gracious warmth, of which he had been deprived so long. His face was pale and drawn, and his eyes so sunken that the sockets seemed like two round saucers. But the anxious look was gone. Although his features showed the ravages of a ten months' campaign, yet for the moment they were at rest, and the whole attitude of the man indicated contentment and tranquillity. But his nervous system was still unstrung.

At the slightest noise in the courtyard of the hotel he would start, and his features display that peculiar expression of watchful anxiety which comes to all men sooner or later if they be seriously engaged in the uncertain pastime of war.

It seemed impossible that this frail shadow of a man, this unkempt ghost, could be the same happy-go-lucky boon companion that we had known twelve months ago in Genoa. The man who then talked of war as he would have talked of a wolf-hunt or a sleighing venture into the pine-forests. The man who, though scarcely out of his teens, could rival a full-grown dock-labourer in his capacity for drink. The man who fascinated us all, and yet in his successes and excesses left us but amateurs. But this is not our story.

My friend, you wish me to tell you all about it. Why, it is the history of two generations and more: since we parted on

the deck of that Rubbatino steamer I have lived a hundred years. You, and those who have not been with us, can never know what we have been through. It is not that we have been beaten,—that is hard enough for any brave man to bear; but we have been beaten by those whom we despise. And being beaten at such hands makes the punishment a slow torment. I tell you I have lived a hundred years. But it is pleasant to be out of it: two weeks of this, and I shall be fit enough to go back. It makes me shudder to think of the state of the poor devils who are left behind. If they could only have a fortnight of this. [And he held one hand towards the grateful heat from the stove, while he gazed fondly at the white ash of the cigarette between his fingers.] They would be new men, and would make a very different history. But I will tell it you all from the beginning.

After we parted in Italy, I went back to the Naval depot at Sevastopol, and I

was there until the end of the year. We had rumours of war,—a delicate attention of your English press. We laughed at them then — that is to say, we sailors laughed. War with Japan! Why, the thing was too absurd even to contemplate. With our powerful Pacific squadron, being reinforced as it was by a battleship and cruiser, it was impossible to believe that these little yellow devils would ever dare to think seriously of war. At least, that is what we were told. We had men amongst us who had served in the Pacific; they plied us with stories of Nagasaki and Yokohama—stories over which we laughed and jested, stories that smacked of debauchery and vice.

But although we juniors of the cafés scoffed at the idea of war, there were some amongst the seniors who shook their heads, and little by little we had evidences that the Naval department itself had become anxious. I received my orders on Christmas

Day. I was appointed to the *Retvisan*, and had instructions to proceed to Port Arthur at once. My brother officers gave me a send-off — a send-off again redolent of the delights of Nagasaki and Japanese tea-houses. They prophesied that I should take my fill of riotous living early in the spring, and it is curious how very nearly those prophecies were fulfilled. At least six times I narrowly missed going to Japan, but not to fill the same picture that my comrades had conjured up in their own minds.

I shall never forget that journey to Port Arthur. I was the only sailor amongst a group of military officers hastening to the front. What a time we had! what dreams we dreamed! what nightmares the realisation of those dreams have proved! It was evident that the stories that had reached us in Sevastopol were not the myths we then believed them to be. War—the certainty of war—was stamped on every train

steaming eastwards. Every station was a headquarters, every siding a rest-camp. All were gay, all were confident, and yet beneath this air of gaiety and confidence there seemed to lurk a frenzied desire to heap more preparation into the twenty-four hours than the twenty-four hours could support. In spite of all the enthusiasm which is inseparable from the preliminaries of war, there seemed to be an undercurrent of unrest and uncertainty. The nearer one approached to the front the more this feeling of depression asserted itself. Even in Mukden, which was fast becoming a vast military emporium, and where all that is bright and smiling and flourishing in the Far East seemed to have congregated, it was impossible not to read anxiety in the faces of the very men who were clinking their glasses amidst ribald jest and patriotic song in the beerhouses of which the town is full. War was then imminent, at least that was the whispered gossip in the cafés. Some said

that Japan had broken off negotiations, others that a settlement had been arrived at, and a third party gave information which filled me with dismay. It was said that the Russian fleet had sailed with the object of defeating Japan. To me this was a bitter blow; for if the Russian fleet had really sailed and had been able to base itself in some Japanese port, it might be long before I could join my ship. I thought of my comrades in Sevastopol; what a terrible misfortune for me it would be if we should establish ourselves in Japan and I had not been present to witness the first-fruits of our overpowering success against those presumptuous little yellow devils. But at Hai-cheng our train was delayed, and the one which followed us brought a naval officer of my acquaintance, who was coming down to Port Arthur with despatches from Vladivostock. He set my mind at rest about the sailing of the fleet. It was due to sail for Japan but I had

still three days in which to join. (Poor Michael! he is dead and gone, like so many of the best. A Japanese 12-pounder shell finished him when his torpedo-boat sank one of their blockading steamers during a night raid.) But my temporary joy at this discovery was to be changed to sorrow at Kinchau. It was pretty cold, and as Michael and I jumped out on to the platform to have a turn to get exercise while the train waited, we were met by some officers of the Siberian Rifles. These men looked as if they were just returning from the funeral of some near relative. I shall always remember the shock I felt when they told their petrifying news. The Japanese had attacked before a declaration of war, and had torpedoed the two flagships of our squadron. Rumour had then exaggerated the story sixfold. Here I found myself about to join a vessel which they said was a sunken wreck in the entrance to our great harbour in the East.

I had travelled these thousands of miles, with no thought in my heart but the promise of success, to find that my duties would find me directing a salvage crew. It was too astounding to be believed, and we journeyed the last few miles to Port Arthur firm in the belief that this *canard* had been circulated either through some Chinese source by our enemies, or to further some stratagem of our own. But in part it was true. I joined my ship on the following day, not as a sunken wreck, but as a more or less useless hulk placed upon the mud.

It would be impossible to describe the feelings of the sailors in Port Arthur at the moment of my arrival. The whole force might well be likened to a man who had received a terrific blow that had taken the whole breath out of him. The juniors were accusing the seniors of incompetency, and the seniors were countering the accusation by bringing charges of neglect of duty and

debauchery against the juniors. The men were all shaken, and there was no strong hand at the moment in sufficient authority to restore the *morale* which had been lost. I will pass over the history of the next month, when I was engaged with my shipmates in the repairing of our battleship. Although it was not uncomfortable, I think it was the most despairing period of the whole war. We juniors knew that we should be up and doing. We, at least, could feel the indignity of remaining magnetised as it were by this false lodestone of a fortress. We realised the disgrace of allowing an enemy, whom we had always despised, to treat us in the manner in which a parcel of schoolboys would treat a wasp's nest. Then came word of Makaroff. What hopes we built on Makaroff! But the cup of our humiliation was to be filled to the brim. If Makaroff had only been spared, if our Navy in the Far East could only have produced another man such as he, I

shouldn't be here, a fugitive, with only a story of disgrace and disaster to tell. Makaroff was a man; and when in a Russian you find a man, you find the best that nature fashions. With the advent of Makaroff I ceased my tedious labour of superintending the hammering of rivets. Makaroff was determined that the destroyer flotilla, which was at the time practically undamaged, should be used to counterbalance the disasters which had overtaken us. For this purpose quite a number of junior officers were selected. The choice falling on those who had the best record, I found myself appointed as second in command of the *Plotva*. My commander was Ivan Kertch. A braver, truer, and finer sailor never clung on to the rail of a destroyer in a heavy sea than poor old Kertch. He is gone, like Michael and the rest of them. I wouldn't be surprised if I was an admiral, if I am spared, at the end of this war.

The restless energy which Makaroff displayed inspired the whole fleet with new hope and activity, more especially so in the destroyer flotilla. We on the *Plotva* were determined that if we could once get on even terms with the yellow boats, we would render a good account of ourselves. When I joined her she was tied up alongside a collier. Kertch was in the cabin of the collier drinking whisky with the captain, who was a countryman of yours. Kertch had only just returned from patrol duty off Talien Bay. He was telling the captain how he had been chased by four Japs, and how he could steam two knots to their one. He received me with delight, and we stayed with your countryman for quite an hour. I do not forget that hour; it was the last really peaceful time I have had until I came here, and it is a matter of six months now since I first joined the *Plotva*. We cast off from the collier, and were running into the basin when the *Petropavlovsk*

made our number, and we had orders to go back on patrol duty to Talien Bay.

This at last was business, and my heart was full of joy and hope when we ran out under the stern of the *Askold*. She was doing guard-ship outside that night. It was a smooth sea; although there was still a bite in the air, the weather had improved wonderfully. Outside the guard-ship we picked up the three other boats which formed our division, and steamed away down the coast for Dalny. The crew were busy cleaning up and polishing the tubes. Kertch and I were on the bridge; as we slipped through the water we talked of home, of the Naval College, and of all our mutual friends far away at Sevastopol. I remember I took my talisman out of my breast-pocket to polish it up a bit. Great heavens! I have no use for a talisman now. We made South Sanshan-tau just after dark, and then the commander of the division made a signal with the stern-lamp

that we were to run in under the signal-station and lie to till morning.

It was on the morrow that the real thing opened for me: hitherto I had been confined to the *Retvisan*, and although I had heard the Japanese big shells hurtling overhead, and had seen the torpedo-boats fighting against the Japanese in the entrance to the harbour, still I knew nothing of war. Before sunrise we were joined by two more destroyers from Dalny. We had orders to patrol thirty miles south, and to return to Port Arthur by sundown. After midnight the wind had sprung up a little, and day broke to a dull leaden sky and choppy sea. The land was just disappearing under our stern when the commander signalled from the left — we were line abreast — that he could make out smoke to the south-west, and that we were to go ahead and reconnoitre. This meant business. I had never heard a more cheering sound than that telegraph, "Full steam

ahead!" Away we slid through the water, raising a great wave that came squelching over our whale-back. We, too, made out the smoke; and as soon as we shortened the interval, it developed into four little black balloons with a speck below, which indicated boats of our own class. We knew that they must be Japanese, because at the moment we were the outside patrol of the whole fleet. Kertch and I had our glasses fixed on them, and we made out that it was a Japanese division coming our way. Kertch stood steadily on: he knew his turn of speed, and was satisfied that there was nothing in the Japanese that could come near us when it came to quick moving. He had not yet called the men to quarters, and it was interesting to watch their eager faces as they leaned over the rail and shaded their eyes to get a view of this enemy with whom they were longing to come to terms. Fine fellows! I wonder how many of that crew are alive to-

day? We stood on until we were within three thousand metres of them, until Kertch was certain that he could make out the dingy red of their hateful flag. Then we put about, and in making the sweep lost a little way. The Japanese meant business, and they were cramming in the coal; we could only hope that your English manufacturers had cheated them in their wares, and that their engines would prove a fair sample of British trade duplicity; but they seemed to hold, for as we raced back to our own flotilla their 12-pounder projectiles splashed and ricochetted all round us. But we easily drew away from them, made our signals, and rejoined our own division, taking up our place on the left of the line abreast.

The flotilla was now in the hands of Commander Brieleff, the senior officer in our division. He made the signal to attack in echelon, our centre to endeavour to break through the enemy's centre and

thus divide him in two, so that the fire of three of our boats might be concentrated on two of his. We stood on at half-speed until only 2000 metres separated us. The Japanese had opened out a little. It was a fine spectacle, our six boats in line, a cable's distance apart, bearing down on the four lean Japs, who, to prevent us from overlapping, had opened out to about a cable and a half. Like ourselves, our enemy had reduced his speed. We were all now standing to quarters. Kertch was on the bridge, I was down with the 6-pounder forward. The men were joking and congratulating each other on the opportunity we should now have of paying off old scores. Brieleff made a special number. It was the *Stereguchi*, the boat next him in the line. The flags read, "Conform to my movements." Before the signal to the rest of his flotilla was made, the Japanese opened fire with their 12-pounders. They carried 12-pounders, we only 6-pounders.

Then came the flotilla signal, "Echelon from the centre, full steam ahead, engage." Merrily chimed the telegraph-bells, and, when our turn came, we felt the *Plotva*, like a racehorse to the spur, bound forward underneath us. All the rest is a tangle of disjointed memories. We were on the extreme left of the line abreast. I can only tell you the confused threads as I recollect them. I remember glancing to starboard, and noticing the five parallel wakes of our flotilla, which seethed up above the breeze ripple. Then the smack of the 6-pounder and the whirr of the maxims brought me to my duties. "That's a hit," shouted the No. 1 of my crew, and at the same moment a shell exploded on our rail. A splinter hit the hopper of the gun, glanced, and then the ear, moustache, and cheek of the No. 1 were gone. He stood a moment, drenching the lever in his hand with blood, then sank to the deck, while another seized the slimy handle

and shoulder grip. I noticed that the men at our boat-rail were firing with rifles. The new No. 1 swung the gun round, and I could see that we had changed our course, and now had a Japanese destroyer abeam on the port side. My eye caught the blood-red radiations on its smoke-fouled bunting. Its funnels were belching flame, while it was so close that the incessant flash from its quick-firers hurt the eye. Projectiles swished above us; but at the moment I did not realise that we were the target. My gun had stopped firing. "Ammunition!" I shouted, and then realised for the first time that I alone of all my gun-crew was standing. My fellows were a heap of hideously mutilated flesh. As I sprang to the gun, I recognised amidst the streaks of crimson remainder a handless forearm. On it was the cherished tattooed *geisha* of my servant Alexis. Men from the tube came to aid me, and then the vessel heeled as if she had col-

lided. The wreck of the maxim from the bridge was swept along the deck, and imbedded itself steaming and hissing in the pile of human offal at my feet. Again the vessel heeled, and I felt myself seized by the hand.

"Excellency, Excellency, the commander is killed. Come quickly to the bridge. We are alone—the other boats have fled."

How I got to the bridge I cannot say: I remember that the hand-rail was twisted like a corkscrew. What a scene! Save for the wheel, steersman, and binnacle, the bridge was swept clean. Maxim mounting, commander, rail, were a tangled mass trailing alongside. As I clung to a funnel-stay, I was actually looking down the smoking throat of a Japanese 12-pounder not six fathoms distant. Black, hissing, and battered, the boat was closing on us like some hideous sea-monster. A dozen of her ruffian crew with short swords in their hands were gathered forward to spring

upon us. There was not time to give an order. The men were now jumping. But my steersman had put over his helm. There was a grinding jar, and we slithered past them, carrying away their rails and forward hamper, and grinding to pulp, against our plates, such of their boarders as had jumped short. As we shook clear our 6-pounder belched into her vitals, and a great geyser of steam shrieked out amidships from between her smoke-stacks. I remember seeing my men pitchfork the four little devils who had boarded us over the side with their bayonets, and then I pitched headlong on to the *débris* of gun-crew and maxim on the deck below. A rifle bullet had just missed my spine and perforated my right lung. The engineer brought the *Plotva* out. How we escaped I don't know, for the yellow devils seemed all round us. But our speed saved us, though they got the poor old *Stereguchi*.

What happened? You may well ask! Why, the two boats which belonged to "C" Division—not to ours—never carried out Brieleff's orders. So we came in as a single *echelon* on a short front. Their left boat got Brieleff and the whole lot of us broadside on, and broke us up. This, in conjunction with their superiority in gun calibre, beat us. We've got 12-pounders now, when it is too late.

What happened to me after that? I was six weeks in hospital. That was a fearful period, because we lost our fleet then. That is, we lost Makaroff in the *Petropavlovsk;* and when Makaroff went, we felt that we couldn't hope to do much until we were reinforced from Europe.

I was just convalescent in hospital when the Makaroff disaster overtook us. Although we have since often been depressed in Port Arthur, I don't think that we ever passed through a worse twenty-four hours than that which followed the

loss of the *Petropavlovsk.* In the last week of April I came out of hospital, and was almost immediately given the command of a destroyer. The boat I got was the ill-fated *Reshitelni.* We had a good run together while she was in my command. We see by the papers that have reached us in Port Arthur that nothing was done by the Russian flotilla. This is a misstatement. We worked devilish hard. Some day, when this war is over, several losses and damages which the Japanese have said nothing about will be placed to our credit. In May Togo was at his old blockading games again; but his last effort in this direction was a dismal failure. I was out that night with three other boats, and we sank every one of the blockading boats in deep water. Our success has been sufficiently proved, since the yellow devils never attempted similar waste of merchant tonnage again. I should like to dwell on this, because we in Port

Arthur — at least, we who have proved ourselves good sailors — resent all that has been said about our incapability. I promise you, my friend, that we juniors were not at fault; and if only some of us could have had a higher command in the beginning, we should never have seen the wreckage of our beautiful fleet. But it is no good crying over spilt milk; some of us, I doubt not, will be on the future Russian ships when they are universally successful.

But to continue my story. During the first week in May I was selected by the Admiral to take the *Reshitelni* on a night reconnaissance to the Elliot Group, where Togo had now based himself. We were not quite certain what part of the group he was using as his base, and if the scheme were found practicable, it was the intention of the Admiral to launch an attack against him with the three divisions of destroyers that were still sea-going. I was piloted out of the harbour by the mine-tug in the

afternoon, and I lay up under Golden Hill until about eight o'clock. The sea had got up a little; but in consultation with my engineer I came to the conclusion that it was not too rough for our enterprise. We had thirty miles to cover to Talienwan, and forty miles on from there, in all about a four hours' trip if we went direct; but I had to make a considerable sweep, so it was not until past midnight that I arrived off the southern entrance to the group. Here I found at least ten merchantmen anchored; I could not go close enough to make out their escort, but we from our low position could count their masts and funnels against the lighter sky. If I had not been alone and under special instructions to discover the anchorage of the warships, I should have attacked these transports as they lay. But as I could discover the tops of only one man-of-war, I determined to search round the island in the hope of finding out Togo's real anchorage. Then, having accomplished

that, to return to have a smack at these boats. Half an hour's cautious steaming brought me round to the northern entrance. We saw nothing, so we lay to under the rocks while three Chinese spies and one able seaman went ashore in the boat. While we were lying to waiting for them to return, we made out what seemed to be a flotilla of torpedo craft leaving the entrance: they were showing stern lights, and we counted five of these. From this we calculated that it was a flotilla being piloted out by a picket-boat, since we distinctly heard one of the boats returning. I had allowed the landing-party one hour, telling them that if they were not back within that time they would run the risk of being left behind. They actually returned in an hour and a quarter, and joined us just as the picket-boat was passing back. It was a ticklish moment, and I feared for a second that the picket-boat would catch the sound of their wash. But it was not so. They brought

magnificent information. According to their account, we were lying as a crow flies within two thousand metres of Togo's battle squadron. My A.B. had been able to count the larger vessels, and the Chinamen, reconnoitring separately, had discovered the boom and the position of the shore coal-supply.

Having taken such bearings as were possible in the darkness, we started off again with the intention of paying our transport friends a visit. I should point out that this transport fleet, although lying at one of the anchorages at the entrance to the main bay in the group, was sufficiently screened from the Port Arthur direction by two of the largest islands. Owing to the big sweep that I had made, I had come in from the north-east, whereas the Japanese would have anticipated an attack from our direction to come from the south-west. I therefore determined to dash clean through the anchorage, torpedoing such boats as I could.

My course would then be from west to east. By returning on a parallel line, I might still be able to do further damage, and slip out the same way that I had come.

I felt certain that I had eluded the patrolling flotilla by coming from the north-west, and I therefore determined to break out the same way. We crept up to our original vantage-point unperceived. Then followed a glorious five minutes: we went through them full steam ahead, steering directly for the vessel whose fighting-tops we could make out above the skylight. We discharged two torpedoes, one against a big merchantman that looked like a converted cruiser, the other against the vessel with the tops: it was either a coast-defence ship or a gunboat. We know the latter torpedo took effect, because we saw the phosphorescent wave caused by the explosion and heard the report. We were through them and gone before they quite realised what had happened. But we

heard bo'suns' pipes, shouts, and yells. I put the boat about, with the intention of making another attack as soon as the tubes were recharged. Just as we came about, a quick-firer opened on us from some fifteen fathoms' distance. We had evidently run into the patrol-boats. I gave the order that nothing was to be fired, and went full steam ahead for the entrance, feeling that this would stop the firing. It was neck or nothing now, and any moment we might have been on the rocks. We were, however, pretty used to the darkness by this, although we had not now the sky-line to guide us. It was a choice between the rocks or fouling one of the merchantmen. We were abreast of one of them before we realised her position; it was evidently a transport, and they made out the glare from our funnels. They opened a musketry fire. It was wild and uncertain, and not very effective. The bullets mostly went high, but a certain number came pretty near us, and I, as usual, was unfortunate.

Hardly out of bed a fortnight, I got another shot through the chest. But I was able to keep the bridge until we reached our original point of entry. Then, with my tunic stiff with blood, I handed over command to my sub-lieutenant, and he brought us back to Port Arthur safely by daybreak. We discharged one torpedo in our break-away, but whether it took effect it is impossible to say; however, we are certain that we torpedoed a coast-defence ship or a gunboat that night, and if you look up the records about that date, you will probably find that a Japanese ship was lost, and possibly a transport as well. Doubtless mines will be given as the cause of the disaster.

By the time that I was landed I was a very fair wreck. It is pretty hard luck for a man to get hit badly again after he has only just recovered from a perforated lung. I was in hospital two months with this wound, and a real bad time I had. It is

for this reason that I lost all the glorious experience which the flotilla had when the mines laid by the *Amur* sank the two Japanese battleships and the cruiser. I was so bad during the first month of this my second turn in hospital, that I didn't know much about anything that was taking place. I was not well enough to sit up and receive visits from my friends until after the fleet returned from its attempt to leave Port Arthur in June.

You ask me what the state of affairs in Port Arthur was at that time? I think I can express it in three words, "Resigned and determined." We had now realised that we could not hope to extricate ourselves without help from Europe. Until the battle of Tehlitz, we had hoped that our investment would be only temporary! But when Stackelberg was driven back to the north, we realised that we had to suffer not only investment but a heavy siege.

The garrison was generally cheerful.

There was plenty of food and ammunition, and there will be plenty of food and ammunition to the end. They talked of the advent of the Baltic Fleet, but we sailors knew that it would be impossible for that fleet to reach us this year; and we doubted that, even in the most favourable of circumstances, it would be able to arrive in Chinese waters until next spring. We were also very anxious about our own Pacific Squadron. All the damaged ships had been repaired, but there was every fear that the passage of the channel and the dearth of coal would prohibit us taking the offensive. The passage we were able to negotiate, but not readily, therefore there was no hope of taking the fleet out under cover of a fog or bad weather. As to the state inside Port Arthur when I left, you can hardly expect me to tell you much beyond that there is no want of food, ammunition, or spirit to maintain the defenders of the fortress to the bitter end.

Yes, things in the hospital were bad; you could hardly expect them to be otherwise. You must bear in mind that we started the investment with all the Nanshan wounded. There were sufficient of these almost to fill all the available hospital space. You should remember that there were very few rifle wounds from this battle; nearly every wounded man in hospital was suffering from the effect of shell-fire, and the majority of shell wounds keep men in hospital far longer than rifle wounds. Then from time to time we had the wounded from the fleet, and towards the end of June the siege operations filled the hospitals till they overflowed.

No; I don't think you can expect me to answer that question. I don't mind telling you my own adventures; but I am not going to enter into a political argument, nor am I going to discuss the present or the future.

To return to my own story: I was

passed fit for duty on July 14, and on the following day I rejoined my old command the *Reshitelni*. As in the case of my first command, I fell in with an adventure the very first night I took a boat out. You probably know we were then using half the remaining vessels of our torpedo flotilla in piloting boats that were bringing us food and warlike stores into the port. Our agents used to bring their cargoes to a certain place where we were able to collect it and take it to Port Arthur. I need not give you more details; but as the Japanese have now put an end to this traffic from this particular locality, there is no harm in talking about it. You remember we were much troubled during the early months of the war by various American and English newspaper-boats, which, claiming the rights of neutrals, were used in the interests of Japan. The most noxious of these was one equipped with wireless telegraphy. We never sighted

her except in close proximity with some portion of the Japanese fleet. The admiral therefore issued instructions that if any of us met her we were to sink her and bring the officers and crew in as prisoners to be dealt with by a court-martial. Well, when I was steering my course for the certain place, there suddenly loomed up out of the darkness in front of us a small steamer showing lights. At first we naturally thought it was one of the blockaders masquerading as a legitimate trader. But there was something about her seen in the misty darkness which called to mind the press-boat, and then we made out, or at least at the moment we thought we made out, her wireless apparatus hanging from her mainmast.

Having satisfied ourselves that this was the case, we obeyed orders. It was not until we picked up the captain, passengers, and crew that we realised we had been in error. The vessel proved to be the

Hipsang. We should not have torpedoed her if she had immediately answered our summons to stop; but as we made her out to be a press-boat, and as she did not slow down at once, we naturally could not give her the benefit of the doubt, and so we sank her. Such mistakes and accidents must occur in war.

I was relieved of my command on account of this trouble, and for about three weeks became a soldier—that is to say, I took over one of the forts that was manned by the reserve sailors from the fleet. I cannot say that this was an uninteresting experience, although of course it had at that time none of the excitement attaching to a buccaneering life on a destroyer. But it was very restful; and as they put the *Hipsang* incident down to my having been shaken by my two wounds, they thought it better that I should be rested by doing shore duty for a period. I was placed on one of the Liautishan defences, so there

was little for me to do but to watch the constant mine-clearing operations in the entrance. You cannot expect me to say much that is good for the Japanese; but I must admit that they carried their attempts to lay mine-fields in our fairway with the utmost bravery and persistence during my period at Liautishan. They must have lost at least half a dozen torpedo-boats in night attempts upon the fairway. To give an honest opinion, they were far too persistent, for they would possibly have brought about better results if they had been contented to lay their mines farther out to sea. We had by this a complete system for dragging the harbour channel, so that anything they anchored close in was certain to be exploded on the following morning. But the Japanese don't fear death, and fifty per cent of them prefer to kill themselves sooner than suffer the ignominy of capture.

The month's pastime of watching from

the summit of a mountain was occasionally broken by a little long-range practice against the more bold of the blockading squadron; but at this time, although we occasionally made out battleships and cruisers on the horizon, yet they never came in to engage us. The torpedo craft and gunboats were constantly to be seen; also from a certain point in our mountain we could catch a very considerable view of some of the investing lines,—but there were strict orders in our section that we were not to waste ammunition in long-range practice against the beseigers.

You ask what was the effect of shell-fire in Port Arthur. Well, it was very disagreeable, though I don't think it was very harmful at this period: it caused a certain number of casualties, especially amongst the Chinese, but the parallels had not yet been pushed up near enough to have the disastrous effect on the buildings and works that they have since had.

At the beginning of August I was relieved of my shore duties, and was appointed acting flag-lieutenant to Admiral Prince Ukhtomsky, second in command of the Pacific Squadron. I joined him on the *Peresviet*. Big business was on hand; messages had come through that it was imperative that the Pacific Squadron should leave Port Arthur, and either fight a fleet action with the Japanese fleet, or make its way to Vladivostock. There was to be no middle course, no turning back. It was to be either a decisive engagement at sea, or, if we should succeed in eluding the yellow man, a dash for the shores of Japan, and then Vladivostock.

Judging from your papers, you people seemed to think that the whole *morale* of the Russian Pacific Fleet had been shattered, and that we were worth nothing. You were quite wrong. We might not have had the same confidence which we possessed at the beginning of the year;

but I assure you a grim determination had permeated all ranks to do something to wipe off the stigma of disgrace which was hanging over us. The veiled taunts which reached us from the highest authorities at home were sufficient to have made a hero of the veriest craven. We felt—that is, we juniors did—that bad luck had been with us from the very outset, and that the time would come when we should get an opportunity, and we were determined that when that opportunity came we would not be found wanting in the spirit to avail ourselves of it. The fleet was coaled to its utmost capacity, and every arrangement made in order that the passage from the inner to the outer harbour might be taken as expeditiously as possible. Orders were issued to every captain, containing strict injunctions as to the course to be pursued in the event of success, partial success, partial failure, or absolute failure; and after receiving assurances from both

home and Stoessel that the moment was propitious, with a final blessing from the garrison, we made the passage of the entrance on the night of August 9th, and put to sea on the 10th.

Luck was against us from the outset. The *Bayan* damaged herself in making the passage, and we had perforce to start one vessel short. Now, I want you to understand that when we left Port Arthur that morning, and saw the great mass of rocks disappearing over our quarter, we, none of us, not one, from captain to coal-trimmer, ever expected to see that harbour again, unless we returned with a victory to our credit. That was the spirit which animated the whole fleet, and that was the spirit which kept us fighting throughout that day. We knew that we should have to fight, that it was impossible for us to get away, since the Japanese must have been aware of the fact that we were bringing our battleships to the outer anchorage.

Nor were we mistaken, for we had barely made thirty miles before Togo's fleet appeared on our port bow. We—that is, the *Peresviet*—were the fourth ship in the battleship squadron. We were making from about twelve to fourteen knots. How anxiously we scanned the Japanese ships! There was the fleet that had brought about all our disgrace and disaster; there were the men whom we had pledged ourselves to destroy or die in the attempt. We counted the vessels—there were four line-of-battle ships and four first-class cruisers; and we were six battleships and four cruisers. The Japanese were accompanied by at least eight divisions of torpedo craft; it was to be a final arbitrament between battle fleet and battle fleet. The advantage in ships and weight of metal was ours, but they also had advantages which overbalanced our numerical superiority. In the first place, we had to economise coal; our ships had deteriorated considerably through the

stress of inactive war, by which I mean that they were not all as serviceable as they would have been if we had been able to give them proper dockyard attention. Also, the Japanese had had far more practice in gunnery than we; but we hoped that their weapons had somewhat deteriorated by use, while, alas! this could not be said of ours,—at least, not to the same degree. The Japanese Admiral made the best use of his superior speed. From his manœuvres it would seem he feared that we did not intend to give him battle. Little did he know the feeling on our decks. About mid-day he crossed our bows, and then, changing from line abreast, he manœuvred as though he would refuse a battle. Previous to this there had been a slight exchange of shots, but this was nothing,—it was only just a little range-finding. It was not until after two that the real battle opened. Before this the Japanese Admiral had manœuvred constantly, until he con-

sidered it time to admit of an engagement. He was now almost abreast of us, 7000 to 8000 metres on our starboard beam. Both fleets were line ahead, and in this formation the battle opened.

We were six battleships, the Japanese four and two cruisers, in line ahead. We were now the fourth vessel in the line. The flag-ship hoisted the signal "Engage," and immediately the firing commenced. This phase of the battle lasted for about an hour. It was severe, but not so severe as that which was to come, for our Admiral had now altered his course so as to reduce the distance between the fleets. The vessel which we had selected for our own particular target was one of the *Fuji* type; and although the sea was rising and made gunnery at the present range extremely difficult, yet we made at least three hits with our heavy guns, and at one time our target seemed to be on fire. We received no damage except to the mainmast,

which was carried away by a ricochet from a shell that had exploded short of us on impact with the water; nor did the ships ahead of us seem to have received any very serious damage, though the *Retvisan* and the *Pobieda* were both hit.

There was a short respite—of perhaps half an hour—while the two fleets were converging, and then the action reopened with desperate violence. The distance had been reduced to about 6000 metres. How the general trend of the action went it is almost impossible for those who took part in it as executive officers to say: all one knows is what happened to one's own vessel and to one's target. We still continued to engage the vessel of the *Fuji* type, while she or such other of the Japanese vessels that had singled us out seemed to find their range in quick succession. Two 12-inch shells hit us amidships: one glanced upwards and burst in the air; the other carried our foremast

away, and wrecked a portion of the upper bridge. The tumult was appalling, for we had now arrived at quick-firer range, and a continuous stream of 12-pounder projectiles was passing above us, exploding on our plates, or damaging our superstructure. Ever and again at intervals some great projectile would hit us, doing woeful damage; but for the main part the heavy projectiles missed, and we on the bridge were so intent in watching for signals from the flag-ship and in conforming to the fleet movements that we had little time to estimate either the damage to ourselves or the damage which we effected.

What we did notice, at least, and what appealed to us all, was the fact that one of the Japanese battleships hauled out of the firing-line just at the same moment as their fleet was reinforced by two more first-class cruisers. It seemed to us at the moment that we were getting the best of

it, and when the Japanese ship hauled out of the line a cheer commenced from the deck of the *Tsarevitch* which passed all down our line. The sea also was getting up, and the sun was sinking in front of us: for the first time for many months the hope of victory grew strong within our breasts.

Our three leading ships seemed to be concentrating their fire on the *Mikasa*, which led the enemy's line. That their shells were having great effect we could see, for the Japanese flag-ship was constantly hidden from our view by the dense smoke which the explosions on her decks had caused. Then, just at this moment, when it seemed at last fortune had veered in our favour, the destiny which rules the law of chances turned against us. All we knew at the time was that our flag-ship had abruptly changed her course. She swung to port without warning and without signal, before it was realised that

she was hit, and that her course had been changed, not from necessity but from the fact that she could not steer: the second vessel had followed her round so closely that a collision was narrowly avoided. As there was no signal yet from the flag-ship, we all conformed to this strange manœuvre; but the intervals having been lost in the heat of the engagement, the squadron became a mob of vessels without formation. But even this need not have been final if the flag-ship could only have made her signal. Then came a paralysing intimation that the Admiral-in-Chief had transferred the command. We knew what that meant,—either that he was killed or wounded; and my own Admiral immediately ordered the fleet signal for the squadron to conform to his own movements.

And here the bitterness of our cup was filled to the absolute brim. We had lost both our masts, and we had not where-

with to hoist this signal, which was necessary to resuscitate order out of chaos. Nor had the Japanese been slow to realise their opportunity, and they were throwing projectiles into us with a rapidity of fire that was absolutely appalling in its results. My Admiral did all that he could do in the circumstances. He steamed ahead, flying the signal from a smoke-stack; but it was too late. The cohesion was irrevocably lost, and the various captains, apparently interpreting the worst clause in their final instructions, saved themselves by flight. It passeth the understanding of men that the Japanese did not sink a single one of us; and this fact indorses my belief that it was sheer bad luck and not good gunnery and seamanship that beat us.

Thus closes the history of the Russian Pacific Fleet, as far as I can give it you. What its ultimate end will be, you and I can guess. But this I can promise you,

"The Japanese . . . were throwing projectiles into us with a rapidity of fire that was absolutely appalling."

my friend—that, even if it takes Russia ten years to build another and adequate Fleet, and if it is manned by the same material as this last, it will sweep everything in these waters before it. We have learnt our lesson.

XVI.

OF AN OFFICER'S PATROL.

THE subaltern commanding the officer's patrol was well satisfied with his day's work. And he had right to be, for, after covering forty miles, he had procured all the information required from him. It had been an exceptionally hard day. The country was more or less water-logged, and it had been impossible for him to keep his patrol on the roads. The going had been so bad that the major portion of the journey had been undertaken on foot. Both men and horses were thoroughly tired, and the subaltern determined to rest for three hours before pushing back to headquarters.

He had reconnoitred right up to Fu-

chau from Wa-fang-tien. He and his six troopers had carried out this reconnaissance without firing or drawing a single shot. They had estimated the strength of the Russian forces gathered at Wa-fang-tien, and had made their way back a third of the distance to Pu-lien-tien. For an hour at least they had seen no sign of the Russian screen; and as it was essential to procure a reliable Chinese guide, the subaltern determined to rest in a small village which lay at the extreme end of the valley they had just entered.

He reconnoitred the village with every precaution, and finding it empty, after posting a sentry at the approach by which he had entered, led his patrol up to the chief villager's house. The village at first seemed to be deserted; but the officer dismounted before the great wooden gates of the chief residence, and, undismayed by the frightful caricatures of the god of war and demons painted on the panels, knocked

loudly. The only response for the time being was the barking of dogs within. But presently the *grille* in the wall chamber to the left of the entrance was pulled aside, and amid the opium fumes emitted, appeared the yellow face of the janitor. It is safe to conjecture that the inmates feared a visit from Cossacks, for as soon as the janitor realised that the wayfarers were Japanese, he immediately closed the *grille* cover, and shuffled round to open the ponderous gates.

The great iron-bound doors swung inwards. The patrol dismounted and led their horses into the courtyard within. The Japanese in their manners are polite, but they do not make war with kid gloves; and while the subaltern was engaging the janitor in conversation by means of ideographs, scraped with the point of his sword on the clay floor of the courtyard, the troopers were leading their horses to the byres and regaling the hungry animals.

After the subaltern had wasted much effort in trying to make the janitôr understand, that worthy finally shook his head and pointed to the house, and then it was, and then only, that the owner and his two sons appeared. One of the sons had been educated either in Kin-chau or Yin-kow, and in spite of the fact that neither could speak the other's language, yet by means of the Chinese ideographs, which they both understood, the Chinaman and the subaltern were able to converse, if not rapidly, at least intelligibly. The troopers had now tied up their horses, and were grouping round their chief, watching with interest the strange conversation which was taking place. Behind them, through the torn and battered lattices of the women's quarters, could be seen the astonished and wondering faces of the farmers' wives and daughters; while in the doorway half a dozen dirty and ill-clad piccaninnies were gazing with awestruck reverence at the strangely

dressed foreigners who had invaded the privacy of their home. The Japanese counts among his many good qualities an unparalleled love for children, and the *sous-officier* of the party seeing the little ones, stepped across and patted their heads, much to the children's astonishment and to the delight of the hysterical women behind the barrier. The dogs, too, had become reconciled to the presence of the strangers, and were proceeding to establish a confidence by nuzzling their boots and spurs after the manner of their kind. It was a scene that a De Neuville might have depicted.

There is an impression in this country that the Japanese soldier, officer and man, is all that is perfection in the fulfilment of his duties. We would hasten to assure the reader that the Japanese are very, very human, and that no mortal is perfect. A Japanese subaltern of cavalry in command of an officer's patrol is just as likely to

"It was good for his men and horses to be rested and fed."

make grievous errors as the young popinjay of a British Lancer entering upon his first campaign. Now there is one principle which youthful subalterns commanding patrols are very apt to forget—which is, that the first duty of every officer, be he a field-marshal commanding an army or a lance-corporal directing a section, is to give his enemy the credit of being just as astute as himself. Now our subaltern, although he had not seen the sign of a Cossack for hours, had no right to risk the information he had acquired by seeking the hospitality of a village. It was good for his men and horses to be rested and fed; it was essential that he should possess himself of a guide; but it was also obligatory that he should not run the risk of his whole enterprise proving fruitless. There are ways of resting and feeding horses even in moments of dire necessity, and there are ways of securing guides without jeopardising the whole of your command. It so happened

that, although he had posted a sentry to his rear, apprehending that he might have been followed, yet he had failed to place a similar watch at the opposite extremity of the village. This slight oversight was to cost him a heavy penalty; but that is always the way in war.

If it had not been that the old opium-saturated janitor had found occasion to go out through the gates into the street beyond, it is probable that the Japanese head-quarters would never have heard of this patrol again. As it was, the old man put his withered head beyond the portico, to view a half sotnia of Cossacks galloping down the street. With more agility than his shambling gait would have suggested, the old man jumped back within the portico and slammed the great gates, fixing bar and bolt,—and just in time, though the Japanese sentry at the far end of the village had seen the hostile forces, and fearing that his comrades would be trapped,

fired his carbine, and came galloping down the street shouting at the top of his voice. If it had not been for the old opium-eater, his act of self-sacrifice would have come too late: as it was, the sentry threw himself from his saddle with the intention of selling his life dearly, and doubtless of saving time for his comrades within the Chinese enclosure. But the Japanese are notoriously poor horsemen, and in dismounting his foot never cleared the stirrup, and he was thrown headlong in the mud. A moment later he was surrounded by his enemies, and butchered as he lay.

It did not require a square yard of ideographs to apprise the subaltern of the nature of the surprise. Nor was there a penman left to make the translation; for, like disturbed rabbits on a warren, every Chinaman in the courtyard vanished.

The subaltern threw a rapid glance round the enclosure, and divided his five men into three groups. There were only two spaces

where it would be possible to scale the mud walls, and these were from the two adjoining roofs, which, as is common in Manchurian villages, prolonged the alignment of the farmer's gable. He therefore placed a man behind each of the inner gates, the cracks of which served as loopholes, and commanded both the salient approaches. The other three he stationed in the portico, for the purpose of sweeping the trees in the adjacent courtyards. He himself, throwing his revolver loose, made for the *grille* in the opium-den. Four loathsome figures were lying prostrate on the bench: one of them, who was still sucking at the hideous spluttering tube, glared upwards at the intruder with a vacant stare; the others, saturated with the narcotic, were dead to the world. Hastily seizing a cap from one of these creatures, the subaltern threw off his own shako and covered his head with the noisome head-dress. He threw back the *grille*-cover

and peered out. He had just one second to take in the scene outside, to see the mangled corpse of his trooper lying in the mud, and to estimate the strength of his assailants, before a bullet buried itself in the plaster beside his cheek and filled his eyes with dust. He shut back the cover, and in a moment it was shattered by a second bullet. Back he leapt—back into the courtyard—and joined the three men in the portico.

The Russians were battering at the gates, and in broken Chinese demanding that they should be opened. The Japanese could afford to laugh at this, for the gates of the Manchurian farmhouses are fashioned to prevent the entrance of marauding bandits. The Russians, too, soon recognised this, for the defenders could hear the hurried orders of the officers, and presently a shot from behind one of the inner gates showed that the Russians were reconnoitring from the adjacent courtyards. Whether the shot was successful did not matter;

it had the effect of stopping a movement from that flank. Presently they heard the sound of movement in the next courtyard, and it was evident that the Russians had discovered ladders. The subaltern directed his men to hold their fire until the scalers were body up above the wall.

They had not long to wait. First they saw three flat caps appearing simultaneously, then the muzzles of three carbines, followed by white faces and blue tunics. Now was the time. The three rifles cracked simultaneously, and the three white faces disappeared instantly. Again the effort was made, more ladders had been brought, and six faces rose over the level of the wall. The troopers fired, and the subaltern levelled his revolver twice: four of the scalers collapsed, but two reached the wall-coping and jumped to the ground. They were followed immediately by others behind them. It looked as if the little party in the portico were about to be over-

whelmed. But the Japanese carbine-blocks clicked rapidly; four more shots rang out, and although one more Russian jumped to the ground, there were only two on foot, for one of the first had fallen to his knees. The Cossacks rushed, but carbine and revolver were ready for them, and they dropped in their tracks before they had made a dozen yards. The subaltern went forward, hurriedly reloading his weapon, to see if a *coup-de-grâce* were necessary; but he was satisfied in removing the carbines and carrying them back to the portico. No further attempt was made to scale the wall.

Night was now beginning to fall, and the subaltern realised that although he might successfully beat off another attack, yet as long as he remained trapped, there would be no means of getting his information to headquarters. This information was everything,—the actual fate of his patrol mattered not at all. He must formulate

some plan. The straw-byres and the inflammable roof of the farmer's dwelling caught his eye. In a moment he came to a decision: he called his *sous-officier* to him, and gave him a paper upon which he had scrawled a rough map, and written his notes during their mid-day halt. His orders were as follows: "We will set fire to these stacks and to the roof of the house; as soon as they are making a good blaze and smoke you will climb over the roof, through the flames if necessary, while we throw open the doors and endeavour to escape, by that means engaging and attracting the enemy. You will get away as best you can with those papers, and deliver them to the colonel before daybreak to-morrow. Trust in the Emperor to help you."

The *sous-officier* looked at him steadily a moment, and saluting said, "But you, Excellency, will be killed. How can I leave you? We will distract the enemy

while your Excellency escapes with the papers."

The subaltern replied, "Brave man, I appreciate your motive; but you have my orders; my orders you cannot disobey."

"But—— !"

"My orders you cannot disobey; you have my orders."

The *sous-officier* was reduced to silence: he saluted, and then secreted the papers in his vest.

It was now dark enough, and the *sous-officier* crept back into the opium-den and collected two of the smokers' lamps. With these they set fire to the stable and the straw-ricks. Owing to the wet, for some time the ricks refused to burn; but the troopers pulled out great armfuls of straw from the centre, and in ten minutes the whole of one side of the courtyard was a great roaring sheet of flame. The sparks flew upwards, and the wind, fanning the flames, carried them to the roof of the

dwelling. Beneath the tiles the dressing was dry and inflammable; the paper windows and the wooden lattices crackled and burnt like tinder. There was just one point where the *sous-officier* could break through. As soon as he was in position, the subaltern called his remaining four men, and lining them up faced the gateway.

Already they heard the jeering shouts of the Cossacks outside; the wretched Chinese inhabitants, from the men's and the women's quarters alike, were bolting out like driven hares and seeking shelter behind the inner wall. The men were silent, but the women were wailing as they saw their home gutted before their eyes. War is cruel and horrible—it knows no mercy.

The subaltern gave the word, the bolts were pulled back, the bars thrown over, and the gates clanged open. With the national battle-cry on their lips the handful of de-

voted little men dashed through the opening. A semicircle of flashes broke the wall of outer darkness; for perhaps one minute the rifles crackled, and then all was over. . . .

The *sous-officier* delivered the papers at daybreak. It is common history how the Japanese flank-attack marched by the way of the Fu-chau road and wrecked Stackelburg's army at Tehlitz. What does one officer's patrol more or less matter?

XVII.

THE LAST SERVICE

THOSE who have made the journey from Chefoo or Wei-hai-Wei to Shanghai during the winter months know how rough it can be in the Yellow Sea. Viewed after the gigantic scale of nature, the Yellow Sea and Gulf of Pe-chili are but shallow saucers filled with water. The slightest external disturbance is sufficient to convulse them, and once convulsed the resistance from shallow bottom and rock-bound coast-line renders navigation both difficult and dangerous. This fact being understood, the reader will more readily appreciate the fixity of purpose which not only found the Japanese destroyers committed to the fury of these uncertain seas, but also

successful in navigating their cockle-shell torpedo craft the two hundred miles from their base to Port Arthur, and, in spite of wintry seas and blinding blizzards, carrying out the duties intrusted to them. The thoughtful naval student marvels at their success, yet, having reviewed the circumstances, is prepared to condone failure. However much the Western expert may extend his tolerance, there is one code which permeates the Japanese naval and military services which will recognise nothing but success.

It so happened that a division of Japanese destroyers was launched forth on an expedition in the face of an almost typhonic blizzard. It was a storm that would drive every coasting steamer and cargo-packet into the nearest haven. There was not a signal station between Wusung and Chefoo that had not had the warning storm-ball hoisted for days. In the teeth of such a storm it is not

surprising that the division of Japanese torpedo craft disintegrated. Two of the boats, battling against the adverse circumstances, were partially successful in their mission. Another was never heard of again. The commander of the fourth, however, having lost touch with his consorts, put into practice that virtue which we in the West countenance as "the better part of valour."

Eight hours after he had started he put back into the torpedo base, and made his signal to the commander of the flotilla that the Yellow Sea, just as it has been at this season of the year to countless sailors before him, was impossible. If the reader knows the Japanese he can realise what the feelings of this commander must have been when, twelve hours later, one of his consorts followed him back to the rendezvous and made the signal that it had been successful in its mission. One can almost see the man standing on the bridge of his

own boat watching the little craft returning, sheeted in white from stem to stern, crusted like a Christmas cake with the frost and icicles of the frozen spume. One can appreciate the bitterness of his soul when he heard that although thirty per cent of the crew were frost-bitten, yet they had done damage to the enemy which was of greater value to Japan than half a dozen destroyers. It is during moments like these that a subaltern realises the true note of discipline. Discretion may be the better part of valour, but power of discrimination in such cases is not vested in the man who is intrusted with the mission, but is the responsibility of the brain that formulates the plan. This at least is the spirit of our allies' conception of service discipline. . . .

A destroyer put into Admiral Togo's rendezvous. It slipped in through the boom, and, passing down the line of anchored battleships, slid in alongside the

depôt vessel. The lieutenant-commander, who wore two decorations commemorative of the Chinese war, climbed up the side of the mother ship and reported to the post captain, who commanded the whole flotilla. He had not been on board five minutes when the flag-ship's launch came panting alongside. The boarding lieutenant of the day stepped lightly on deck and, saluting, gave information that the chief naval staff officer would like to see the commander of the incoming destroyer. Every one of the officers who made the little group standing on the quarter-deck of the torpedo depôt vessel knew what this message implied. But there was not a single face that gave expression to the thoughts passing in each mind. The commander of the destroyer saluted his seniors, his face lighting up momentarily with the expressionless Japanese smile, and then accompanied

the boarding officer down to the picket launch.

Arrived at the flag-ship, the commander was conducted at once to the cabin of the chief staff officer. That officer received him with all the courtesy and polite dignity which is associated with the service etiquette of this great people. The commander was instructed to state his story of his unsuccessful mission. This he did in a straightforward and seamanlike manner. When he had finished, the chief of the staff handed him the paper packet of cigarettes which lay on the table. Then drawing in his breath to the full extent of his lungs, the chief staff officer said, "Lieutenant Watanabe, you are relieved of the command of your boat, and you will report yourself for duty to the commander of the gunboat *Oshima*."

The face of the commander as he heard this news was as expressionless as that of

the staff officer as he gave the order. Watanabe saluted gravely and withdrew from the cabin. He passed to the quarter-deck and joined a group of officers of his own seniority. They discussed the fortunes of the war, the prospects of the future, and the various topics which were of interest at the moment; and then the picket-boat having been piped, the lieutenant-commander went over the side, smiling to his friends. Yet, as he passed down the gangway and returned the salute of the sentry, to all intents and purposes he was a dead man. And what is more, every one of his friends knew this.

The gunboat *Oshima* was lying in Chemulpo harbour. For the time being she was doing guardship at that port, while it was the sea base of the 12th Division of Imperial Japanese Infantry. The officer in command and the first lieutenant had gone on shore to be present at some entertainment which was

being given by the Japanese Consul in connection with the mission of the Marquis Ito to the Court at Seoul. Lieutenant Watanabe, who was now doing duty as second lieutenant on the *Oshima*, was therefore left in charge. It is half an hour's run in a steam launch from the anchorage to the mud flat landing-stage at Chemulpo. Watanabe silently paced the quarter-deck until he saw the empty launch returning. As soon as he made out her wave he sent one of the watch to call the second engineer. When that officer arrived the two men paced the deck for perhaps five minutes, and then the lieutenant went below, while the second engineer busied himself with certain instructions to the crew of the launch. In half an hour Watanabe returned on deck. He was in full dress uniform, with his orders upon his breast; his sailor servant brought up two wicker baskets and immediately passed them down to the launch. A

muster of the crew was then piped, and Watanabe formally handed over the command of the ship to the officer of the watch. Then, accompanied by the second engineer and two other junior officers, all in full dress uniform, he moved towards the ship's side.

As he climbed down the ladder every hand was raised in silent salute. The little midshipman on the launch shouted "Cast off," the tiny bell tinkled, the engines revolved, and Watanabe severed his connection with the Japanese navy. As the boat-hook left the ship's side the Rising Sun at the peak was dipped. Away went the launch; Watanabe, standing in her stern, sees and acknowledges the homage that the ship's company pays him. Away she sped, with her head pointing seawards towards the scene of the battle between the *Variag* and Uriu's squadron.

The entrance to Chemulpo harbour is a network of rugged islets and pinnacle

rocks. For the most part these are uninhabited except for a few poverty-stricken fishermen, and it is only the larger that can boast of their squalid homesteads. It was to one of the uninhabited islands that the launch made her way: she ran into a little cove, and the party of officers in the stern sprang lightly ashore. Watanabe's servant passed the wicker baskets after them, and then his master and the second engineer moved over to a little secluded bay. Here the servant accompanied them with the baskets. Both men proceeded at once to divest themselves of their uniforms, and it was noticeable that Watanabe carefully brushed and folded each garment as he took it off. When undressed both men went down into the sea and washed themselves all over. The baskets were now open. They contained two complete suits of pure white garments. Both men dressed in these, and the second engineer, bowing to his brother officer,

moved away to make some preparations elsewhere.

The servant was about to pick up his master's uniform when Watanabe detached the two medals from his frock-coat, and wrapping them in a piece of paper, instructed him to take them to his home in Japan. "The rest," he said, pointing to his uniform and his sword, "will go with me."

The servant carried the personal effects away, and Watanabe was left alone. He turned and looked seaward over the dull grey expanse of water towards the horizon which stood out as the line dividing him from the stronghold of his country's enemy. He never took his gaze away from that sky-line until the second engineer returned and took him by the hand and led him to the place which was prepared. Here the crew of the launch had assembled. They stood round in a semicircle, and placed in front of them was a white sheet. At one end

was a Japanese pillow, at the other a little table. On this lay, wrapped in clean white paper, a short knife. Watanabe strode to the sheet; he bowed to his comrades, and they all stood at attention in mute salute. He then sat down and arranged his posture so that his neck might lie upon the pillow. Having settled himself he proceeded to unfold the lower portion of his dress and lay bare some four inches of skin from the waistband upwards. The second engineer handed him the paper-covered knife; he seized it in the middle of the blade, and turning his head, bowed as well as he could in his prostrate position to his comrades. His eyes finally sought the second engineer's. This officer was in position: he stood at Watanabe's right side with a naked sword in his hand. At an inclination of the doomed man's head he raised the blade skywards. With one bold, firm, and determined action, Watanabe self-inflicted a slight incision from left

to right; he turned his eyeballs upwards, the second engineer caught the signal, and with a single sweep of the sword he helped Watanabe to vindicate his own honour, the honour of his forbears, and the fair name of Japan.

A fire was at hand, and in half an hour Watanabe, his uniform, and his sword had been treated to the obsequies of a fallen Japanese hero. When the watch on the *Oshima* saw the volume of smoke rising skywards from the island, they lowered the emblem of the rising sun half-mast from the peak. . .

Thus it was that when foreigners in Tokio read the notice in the Japanese papers that Lieutenant K. E. Watanabe had died on active service, and had been given a posthumous decoration by the Emperor, they came to the conclusion that there had been some naval side issue which the Japanese had not considered it expedient to publish in detail.

XVIII.

"ACTUM EST DE ——."

A SOLITARY observer stood upon the crest of a snow-wrapped eminence. As he was enveloped in a voluminous military cloak with a hood, it was almost impossible to make out the features of the man, or to discover any reason for his solitary observations. A little scrubby grey beard, upon which the breath was already frozen, and two tiny twinkling coals of eyes, were all that were visible. But away in front of the observer stretched perhaps the most pregnant military spectacle that the century is likely to see.

The knoll upon which the observer stood was a detached eminence a little to the rear of a broken ridge: at the foot of this

ridge lay a white-carpeted valley sloping up, at first gently, and then almost precipitately, to a second barrier of snow-capped rock. Away beyond this rose huge masses of volcanic *débris*, a frowning wall of Nature's ramparts. But in spite of the chaste mantle with which the elements had striven to shroud Nature's handiwork, the whole panorama bristled with the works of man. There was not an eminence but showed by its bevelled crest-line that sappers and engineers had laboured to aid Nature in her scheme of massive strength. In the distance loomed great citadels with blasted parapet and stone-revetted curtain. In the middle distance the snow-drifts ill disguised fantastic patterns, whose sinuous trace betrayed ingenious device in modern obstacles and abbattis. And then at the solitary observer's feet, the plain, that should have been a bare expanse of winter white, was coursed and seamed with earthworks, so

that with parallel and traverse, covered-way and shelter-trench, it gave the impression of some huge irrigation or mining area.

It would be hard to find a simile to describe a panorama so enthralling: if you turned with the solitary observer and looked behind the knoll, the scene that met your gaze at once pictured a gigantic ant-heap: the reverse of every hill was teeming with thousands of human beings. Ant-like, hundreds of these were grouped beneath the crest-lines; others were labouring in long strings, hauling supplies, ammunition, or implements to various summits; while far below were the countless tabernacles which protected the vast besieging army from the rigours of a Manchurian winter. A great transport *queue*, men, vehicles, and animals, was slowly crawling northwards, marking the channel which fed 80,000 men. Here and there faint wisps of smoke curled skyward. A

warm winter sun gave lustre and sparkling brilliance to the picture. The slow movement, minute detail, and strange grouping emphasised the simile of an army of ants.

But there are other scenes and sounds which dispel as an illusion the suggestion of a peaceful working day. The still winter air quivers and vibrates as the huge watershed in the west catches and hurls back in deafening reverberation a continuous din of war. Just watch that nearest crest-line for a moment. Flash after flash gleams out against the embevelled top; great geysers of snow and *débris*-dust spurt skywards to swell the lowering yellow cloud drifting sullenly along the valley. Ever and anon from the citadels behind, great pillars of white smoke unmask the batteries where Russian gunners ply their trade. Look down in the parallels below. Your ear squirms to the laboured whir of enormous shells as

they displace the frosty air. They strike and burst upon the snow, raising fleecy clouds, which join the shrapnel smoke drifting to augment the pall that shrouds the doomed city. From behind you comes the bark of field-guns in action, while to the left the welkin throbs with the windage-screech of worn howitzers.

The hand of God had fashioned this scene an artist's paradise; the works of puny man have made it a veritable Hades. In a theatre so extensive and so full of fearsome setting it is difficult to particularise. The tumult, the awful consequences of the issue, the despair of yesterday, the hopes of to-day, and the terror for to-morrow so confuse and depress you that the panorama survives only as some hideous dream. For one second you are spell-bound with the spectacle of some magnificent demonstration of military discipline and endurance; the next moment you are appalled and

paralysed by some ghastly act of carnage. The triumphs of human intellect and the acme of human brutality stand hand in hand. It is bad to be an uninterested spectator of such a scene. Happy the man to whom it is foreign; blessed the country that never bred her sons for this!

Just follow our gaze to the foot of the knoll above which the solitary observer stands. A Japanese battery is here in action. The squat guns nestle beneath a rise. The limbers lie in a cutting behind, and the ammunition carriers have worn just half a dozen tracks in the snow, like sheep-tracks on the face of a Highland brae. As you watch you can see each motion of the gunners. As unconcernedly as if they were firing a holiday salute in Shiba Park they run the gun back, sponge it out, readjust the spade, and relay the piece. You are near enough to hear the click of the breech as it snaps home. You see the gun groups spring aside,—

Number One with his lanyard taut. You hear the quick order of the section commander, and then you strain your eyes to separate your individual flash from the score of bursting shrapnel sparkling above the target. The battery commander walks up and down behind the guns, ever and anon beating his arms against his chest to banish the numbness from his chilled extremities. He stoops to pick up a fragment of a shell that exploded almost at his feet, tosses it away, and steps forward to correct a range. The Russian guns have discovered the battery; salvoes of shrapnel burst above the Japanese gunners. Though the spiteful crackle of their rapid explosions almost deafens you, and though you can see the snow scourged up all round the battery by the vicious strike, there is no alteration or diminution in the service of the guns. Three men and a subaltern from the left section are swept to the ground. The battery com-

mander was talking to the subaltern at the moment. He takes no notice of his fallen comrade, but moves up to the bereaved section. He leaves two hospital orderlies, who are lying in the snow behind him, to judge whether the fallen are worthy of the hospital. More Russian missiles have been attracted to the target. Now the canopy of bursting shrapnel above them seems continuous. Then all sound is dwarfed by the rushing advent of a giant projectile. For a moment the battery is blotted out behind a great flash of lurid flame and pillar of smoke and snow. It drifts aside; one gun of the battery is totally destroyed, another stands solitary, while the displaced snow on every side is blurred with mangled gunners. Out of this wreck the battery commander emerges, gives the order to cease firing, and then himself sinks motionless across a trail.

We turn to the silent watcher on the

hill-top and wonder what is passing in his mind. Such details as a decimated battery have no concern for him. He is the man, the one man, responsible for the success or failure of these stupendous operations. He turns and walks slowly down the reverse of the hill. He has barely moved when a chance projectile bursts almost on the spot he had just left, obliterating the very foot-marks that his boots had made: he never turns his head. One can only conjecture the outcome of his short quarter of an hour of observation. Judging by results, we may hazard that he had that day received the whip from Tokio which apprised him of the menace of Russian reinforcements,—a whip that made it imperative that his army should seize some position from which it would be possible to destroy the remnants of the Port Arthur shipping. Although, as he passed down to rejoin his staff, which was waiting for him at the foot of the hill, there was nothing to be

read in his impassive face, yet we may conjecture that the result of that brief solitary observation would be destined to render desolate another five thousand homes. Such is war! . . .

A great white Empress liner steamed into Kobe harbour and dropped anchor in that sunny port at the entrance to the Inland Sea. The Company's launch conveyed the merry party of foreign passengers to the Bund. Here they were duly passed through the Customs and then turned adrift in the sea-town, to be mobbed for patronage by a concourse of ricksha coolies. Sturdy fellows, who by their employment in a treaty port had picked up sufficient of the foreigner's language to enlist his sympathy and to extort his money. Healthy, cheery children.

One foreigner had business in the town, and he stepped into the nearest ricksha without a glance at the man who was

to pull it. On arriving at his destination he turned to the coolie to instruct him to wait.

"Very good, master, my number 'Sixty-nine.'"

For the first time the foreigner noticed that the coolie was not only a well-set-up brawny fellow, but also that he was handsome, and, for a Japanese of his class, intelligent in feature. The foreigner completed his business, and, returning to the street, called for "Sixty-nine." Half a dozen rickshas left the line of expectants in front of the building, and then a very old and gaunt coolie pushed in before them all, shouting in pigeon English, "This one, Sixty-nine have got."

"The devil take you," said the foreigner, "you are not my coolie."

The old man doffed his soup-tureen hat to expose the number, and burst into a voluble explanation. It chanced that one of the Japanese clerks of the establish-

ment had accompanied the foreigner into the street. He immediately translated—

"Sir, this old man wishes to apologise to you deeply, but it was his grandson's ricksha that you took. While his grandson was waiting here for you, he was called up as a reserve man to join the army, therefore his grandfather has taken his place."

We have finished with the foreigner, and we will follow the fortunes of Sixty-nine. The little slip of paper, issued from the Regimental Depôt, had arrived at his home just about the same time as he had taken up the foreigner on the Bund. The old grandfather had at once hastened with the paper down to the station to give it to his grandson. One of the unsuccessful clamourers for patronage had advised the old man where the "fare" had taken his grandson. Following this direction, he found his grandson waiting for the foreigner. Immediately the two men had

changed clothes, and number Sixty-nine went straightway to his home.

It was a poor little home, just a slight erection of matchwood and greased paper, buried amongst thousands of others of the same type in the most populous portion of the town. As number Sixty-nine walked up to the dilapidated verandah two women were awaiting him, the one an elderly dame in a neat gown, the other a slip of a child-wife poorly but gracefully dressed in a striped *kimono*. Both women greeted him with a smile of welcome, bowed low, for the courtesies of womanly etiquette stimulate both the highest and the lowest in Japan. Both the women knew the nature of his errand. The one was giving a grandson to the call of duty, the other a husband. But though their feelings were actually the same as those which would have torn Western women in similar circumstances, yet there is no code in Japan which will

allow women to show anything but gladness either in patriotic sacrifice to their country or in duty to their men folk.

Tied to the back of the child-wife, and peeping over her shoulder, was a tiny little brown face. Just a microscopic imitation of the human face: it was a six-months'-old baby. And it crooned gleefully as it recognised its father. The parting was to be short and undemonstrative; in five minutes Sixty-nine had collected the few personal effects that he wished to take with him: a packet of cigarettes, a few odds and ends, and an insignificant extract from the household funds. Sixty-nine bowed low and dutifully to his grandmother. Then he turned to his wife. Although her eyes could barely keep back the tears, yet etiquette forced from her the wifely smile, and she bowed lowly to her husband. For a moment he stood toying with the little face that peered over her shoulder; the child crowed

happily, and throwing up its tiny hand seized a tinsel ornament from its mother's hair. With a convulsive effort it pulled it out and offered it to its father. The ricksha coolie smiled, and taking the child's gift, pinned it on his breast. One more pat on the tiny cheek, one more bow to his grandmother, and Sixty-nine was gone to swell the army of ants which were to undermine Port Arthur. . . .

A wayside station. The platform is teeming with a gay crowd; the whole of the railway buildings are festooned with strings of lanterns and bunting. On every side children and grown men are waving flags with the national device—a blood-red spot on a white field. The white-shakoed policemen are good-naturedly keeping the crowd of gaudily dressed women and excited children away from the two brass bands which have played the students from the neighbouring educational establishments down to the station. On all the houses,

heaped artistically on either side of the permanent way, are floating either the national flag or great paper balloons representing fantastic dragons or sea monsters. This scene is the external evidence of a nation's patriotism.

A bell rings in the station, the policemen and porters press the crowd back from the edge of the platform as a troop-train steams in. It must halt to take water. A deafening shout of "Banzai" breaks out from the enthusiastic concourse; a thousand heads, showing the yellow facings of a Kobe battalion, are thrust from the carriage windows, and the soldiery give back an answering hurrah which drowns the united efforts of the schoolboy bands. Daintily dressed women press forward with little presents of cigarettes, sweetmeats, and fruit; infirm and elderly veterans, who remember the civil war, and who have never yet donned European clothes, hobble with the aid of sticks to press a coin into the hands of the

generation that has been chosen to vindicate their country's honour. Younger men, with their breasts decked with the medallions that tell of a past Manchurian campaign, hold up infants in whose hands are those pretty little talismans which their wives have worked for the safe-keeping of those who go forth to war. Although the soldiers shout in the ecstasy of their excitement, yet the very scene upon the platform brings back to the minds of most the homes that they are leaving, perhaps never to return. The engine whistles. Officials push back the thronging well-wishers, and the train rolls out of the station amid the cheering, which voices the nation's blessing. How many will ever see their homes again! Have we not read the report that one regiment at Port Arthur went into action two thousand eight hundred strong, and mustered on the captured position two hundred and eight rank and file! . . .

If the spectator had again climbed to the

summit of the snow-wrapped hillock from which the commander-in-chief of the besieging army had made his final calculations, he would have seen that some movement of moment was in preparation. To right and left, almost as far as the eye could see, parallel lines of cordite flashes showed that the little gunners were doing their utmost. The whole atmosphere shrieked and throbbed with the passage of the iron messengers from great naval guns; with the discordant screech of thundering howitzers, the vicious snap of field-guns, and the dull monotonous roar as the mountains gave back the culminating echoes from thousands of bursting projectiles.

The ridge seemed to seethe and disintegrate before this appalling onslaught. It appeared that the very crest-line had been riven away. A great curtain of yellow picric smoke swept up as a barrier between the ridge and the major defences, and then caught by the bitter north wind that swept

across the peninsula, it mingled with the coal-smoke from the harbour and was carried away seawards as a murky haze. Yet even where it was densest its breast sparkled and scintillated with the flashes of fuse-burst shrapnel which were pouring over the position in countless hundreds. Every cover behind suggested movement. The great army of ants was about to migrate.

But it is not of the ants as an army we would write: to follow the fortune of the whole is but to indifferently usurp the *rôle* of the historian. Those who would know of war should learn of it from the standpoint of the humblest atom that goes to furnish the whole. Let us single out one solitary ant from these masses clinging under the crest-lines and the protecting cover of the parallels, waiting the moment to arrive when they shall be loosed upon that seething inferno which is their destined goal.

Number Sixty-nine's teeth chattered as if his jaws would break. It was not

from fear or excitement; there were few amongst the two hundred men standing at ease in that particular parallel who were cursed with nerves, or even, if they had once known what fear was, gave now a thought for the chances of bodily hurt or death. Six months ago they might have been recruits, now they were veterans. The men stood at ease in the slush at the bottom of the trench, and as they stood the biting wind from the north blew through them and chilled them to the bone. They were awaiting the order to assault. Half an hour ago they had taken off their greatcoats and piled them in a casemate. They carried nothing but their rifles and ammunition. No wonder they were cold, for the wind was such that it would have cut through the thickest fur, and these men were clad in serge alone. Some stamped their feet and others rubbed their hands; but for the most part they stood still, and betrayed no movement

but the quivering chin. The company officers shivered with the men, save for the regimental staff, who were grouped round the colonel studying a rough sketch of the ground which any moment now they might be called upon to cross.

If the foreigner whom we have already connected with Sixty-nine were now to see his man, he would never recognise in the thin, haggard, bearded face the same robust and sleek coolie who had so pleased him when he landed in Japan. But though he looked drawn and emaciated, and though the biting cold had changed his colour from full blood-bronze to greenish yellow, yet withal he was hard and desperate. The lustre in the little almond eyes showed that though hardship and exposure had wasted the flesh, yet it had brought no deterioration in spirit and muscle. Just look down the line to satisfy yourself on this point. There was but one wish animating that *queue* of pigmy soldiery; it

was that the order might come speedily which would release them from inaction and the misery of its attendant cold.

Sixty-nine's eyes were glued on the little casemate in front of which he stood: it was a mere hole excavated beneath the parapet, and in it crouched two men of the Signal Corps. One of them had his ear pressed to the telephone receiver. He caught Sixty-nine's gaze and nodded slightly. Sixty-nine knew what it meant: the long-waited-for order was coming; mechanically he shifted his rifle to his left hand, and measured the distance which separated him from the foot-purchase which the sappers had left at intervals along the parallels for the purpose of egress. The second signaller wrote down the brief message, and ran to the group of officers worrying the map. The colonel, who was squatting Japanese fashion, took the paper, rose to his feet, deliberately divested himself of his overcoat, then running up the foot-

hold, in a moment was standing alone upon the parapet.

There was no call to attention; the simple order passed down the ranks, and in a second, like ants, the men were swarming over the obstacle into the open. In moments like these memory serves you badly. You might be engaged for hours in a hand-to-hand struggle, and then perhaps at the end one or two trivial incidents alone would remain in your mind. How he got out of the trench, or what happened when once he was out, Sixty-nine never knew. He remembered racing at the head of his group behind his captain; and then his captain threw up his arm in signal, and the next moment they were all lying down in the snow. All he heard was the infernal tumult of the shells as they chased each other overhead. He remembered turning half over and feeling with his hand, uncertain whether, in breasting the parapet, a certain little

tinsel talisman had not been torn from its place round the second button of his tunic.

How long they lay there it does not matter; but presently the captain called back to the company subaltern, the section leaders re-echoed the call, and they were all up, rushing for the slope above them. Then for the first time the proximity of the enemy was forced upon them. Like the opening of a *barrage*, the full force of a held musketry fire broke upon them. The swish and splutter of the nickel hail killed all other sounds. The whole column seemed to wither before it, and with Sixty-nine following on his heels the officer threw himself down behind some rocks that appeared black and naked through the snow, and realised that, of two hundred men, perhaps fifteen had reached the temporary haven.

There was no diminution in the high treble song of the bullets, and for the

first time Sixty-nine looked back. It seemed that the whole plain was moving. Not alone from the parallel they had just left, but from all the parallels, were debouching streams of yellow men,—yellow in dress, yellow in skin, and yellow in facings. Then his officer rose up and stood erect. They had reached dead ground, and until more should also reach it, they would be passive spectators of the passage of the plain.

But although the parallels overflowed in hundreds, only dribblets reached the dead ground. The company ensign unfurled the company flag, and planted it in the snow. The tiny nucleus among the rocks cheered, and as they cheered the prostrate men in the plain below re-echoed the national cry. The check was only temporary, for the gunners had discovered the works from which the flank fire came, and half of the guns turned their energies on that point. Within fifteen minutes of

gaining the dead ground the officers were able again to form up the residue of their companies.

Five minutes' respite, and the order passed down the ranks to light grenades. In a moment the men were stooping to blow the slow-matches at their waists; and it was forward and up again. The ensign seized his flag, and with the agility of an antelope carried it in the lead. Fifteen to twenty yards and they were right under the parapet with its sandbag dressing. Sixty-nine threw his grenade over it, and as each panting man arrived at the parapet the air was filled with the hissing of these strange missiles. A moment, and then the flaxen beards appeared over the top of the sandbags, and magazines were emptied at point-blank range into the head of the attack. The ensign fell, the captain fell, the stormers fell in sheaves. Sixty-nine tried to scale

the parapet, but the snow crumbled and gave. Then some one pushed him from behind, lifted him bodily, and before he realised how it happened he had gained a foothold on the summit: he shortened his arm to strike, but there was no enemy to oppose him. Inside the trench was a spluttering fire-swept hell: the grenades were now doing their duty, and, scared by this unexpected danger, the Russians were flying from the farther end. It was all over. With shouts of "Banzai!" the panting infantry hauled itself up into the position.

The first line of the defence was taken. It had cost much in the taking, but this was trifling to the cost of holding it. The Russian gunners had seen their dark-coated comrades streaming away to the second line. They had seen the cloud of smoke-puffs from the bursting grenades, and they could see the streams of yellow

men entering the parallel. What the bayonets had not been able to do shrapnel quickly accomplished. The Japanese officers tried to find cover for their men, but there was no hiding from that pitiless rain of lead, and in a quarter of an hour the captured trenches were three times as full of Japanese casualties as they had held Russians. It was back to the dead ground again. And here the remnants of three regiments rallied, and wished for night. . . .

If the cold had been miserable while they were waiting in the trenches, it was nothing to compare with the state of misery in which those poor soldiers found themselves when night fell. The north wind as it blew up the valley pierced them to the bone; they had neither food, nor fire, nor drink. Many were wounded, and where the blood had saturated their clothes the texture was frozen to the con-

sistency of board. For the sake of warmth the men huddled together in groups. The *mêlée* had been too great to hope that the units might be disentangled. It was now one great homogeneous mass animated with one spirit, one object, which was to complete the work which it had begun.

The fall of night had brought no diminution in the noise of battle. The whole length of the lines they had so recently left were sparkling with the discharge of their own guns and with the flash bursts of the Russian shell. Nor were they secure from casualty, and ever and anon the great flood of weird white light from the search-light on Itszushan showed the gunners how to find them. Occasionally some massive projectile would tear its way into the centre of this mass of desperate men, sweeping away half companies at a time; mangled corpses and bursting hand-gren-

ades would be scattered broadcast amongst their shivering comrades.

Sixty-nine lay amongst this desperate medley, his hands and feet buried deep in the snow to prevent them from freezing. Then they heard the pant of climbing men beneath them,—reinforcements were arriving. The officers along the front did their utmost to form the men; it mattered not the battalion, the regiment, the company, —as the men lay they were formed. How it began or where the order came from or who was responsible, no one knew and no one cared. All Sixty-nine remembers is, that once more they were climbing upwards and thanking Providence for the movement which enabled them to get warmth again into their stiffened limbs. Up and up they went, past the trenches they had won and lost earlier in the day. There was no attempt at a surprise, no endeavour to make the effort in silence: orders were

shouted up and down the line; men half crazy from the tortures they were suffering through returning circulation were either crying out in their pain or laughing and singing with the echo of lunacy in the pitch of their voices.

A dark parapet showed up in front of them. Suddenly it became as light as day: like a display of fireworks some hundred star-shells were bursting overhead, and as the magnesium flared up, the assaulters saw that the Russians were standing up upon their trenches prepared to meet them. In a moment the air was alive with the hissing of burning fuses, and a hundred petty explosions from hand-grenades singed the head of the assault. It hesitated, quivered, lacerated and broken, then pushed backwards, to be received upon the bayonets of those who were following behind.

It was but a momentary hesitation, and

the little men came again with an impetus that neither rifle-bullet, hand-grenade, parapet, nor bayonet could resist. As their ancestors had done a thousand years before, to gain a footing on the parapet the Japanese made ramps of their dead and wounded. Number Sixty-nine had been in the first rush; a bursting grenade had almost torn the coat off his back, and he had been beaten backwards with the rest. But as the reinforcement pushed up from behind, he came with it, and clutching his rifle with one hand tried to haul himself up to the parapet.

The light still held as the Russians, to enable the taper bayonets in the trenches to do their killing surely, fired salvoes of star-shell. Against the white half-light the desperate defenders stood out as shadows on the crest-line; one great spectre made a downward lunge at Sixty-nine. The bayonet whizzed past the little

man's ear, and the catch carried away his shoulder-strap. Dropping his rifle, he seized the firelock in both hands, and putting his feet against the rock prised the Russian from his balance and brought him toppling down. What happened to this enemy he never knew; for already the quick hands of the assailants were piling the bodies of the dead against the parapet, and joining the rush with empty hands, Sixty-nine found himself on the summit. Was it a temporary purchase? Sixty-nine was never to know, for he had no time to calculate. Once he had reached the summit he hurled himself into the trench beneath. As far as he was concerned the rest was all obliterated. He heard the coarse curses in a foreign tongue; he heard the shrill shouts of victory from his comrades; men stamped on his face, and then bodies fell above him. As a useful ant in the

great army of workers his piece was done; but he and a few mad desperate spirits like him had allowed those who came after them to make the purchase permanent.

For thirty long minutes a hand-to-hand battle continued above him. Men threw grenades in each other's faces; half-demented Samurai flung themselves upon the bayonets of the dozen Muscovites who held the traverse in the trench.

Who shall say that the day of the bayonet is past, that the brutal grips of men in war are obsolete? Could sceptics have hovered above that trench-head and seen the shimmer of the steel as it gave back the white glare of the star-shell; could they have heard the sickening thud of bayonet driven home, the grate of steel on backbone, the despairing sob of stricken man,—they would never have preached their fallacies to a confiding

world. Although there was not a breach that had not its cartridge in the chamber, the men roused to the limit of their animal fury overlook the mechanical appliances which make war easy. They thirsted to come to grips, and to grips they came: hardly a shot was fired. The hand grasped firm on the small of the butt, when the mind means killing, forgets its cunning, and fails to operate the trigger.

But it had to end. The old colonel had fought his way through his own men to the very point of the struggle. He stood on the parapet, and his rich voice for a second curbed the fury of the wild creatures struggling beside him.

"Throw yourselves on their bayonets, honourable comrades!" he shouted; "those who come behind will do the rest."

His men heard him, his officers heard him. Eight stalwarts dropped their rifles,

held their hands above their heads, and flung themselves against the traverse. Before the Russian defenders could extricate the bayonets from their bodies, the whole pack of the war-dogs had surged over them. The trench was won. The rest was a massacre. . . .

We will spare the reader a description of that shambles as it appeared when the sun rose. Only those who have seen an *abattoir* in a Chicago packing-house can form the least conception of the spectacle. Upon the summit of the highest level of the works the morning rays of the wintry sun caught the white and scarlet of Japan's symbolic flag. On the bunting scarlet predominates, and thus it was on this war-scarred crest. The virgin snow was stamped out, and in the slush and *débris* that remained, scarlet — the life's blood of hundreds — predominated. By that strange perversity which rules our moral code, the work of brutal killing

had barely ceased before the softer touch of human resolve had commenced its charitable operations. The surgeons and their orderlies were hard at work. They waded into the shambles and handed up the living when it was possible to separate them from the dead. On the brink of the parapet stood three surgeons, and as each mangled frame passed it was placed at their feet. Many and many were just pushed aside, for on them a surgeon's skill would have been but wasted energy. A more merciful course was therefore adopted.

From a corner of the trench a clay- and blood-stained figure was brought for inspection. The tunic was torn from breast to shoulder, and had frozen stiff. The surgeon might have passed it as a corpse if the eyes had not opened. He squatted down and pulled the stiffened tunic aside. "That," he said, turning to his senior, "was a providential escape. See, the

bayonet caught that metal ornament, which took it on to the button, so that it glanced upwards and went through the shoulder instead of the lung. The man succumbed to a contusion elsewhere." And with that, a yellow ticket was fastened to his buttonhole; and thus it was that Sixty-nine was able to return in a hospital ship to Kobe.

THE END.

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